

On Musical Revelations

Gender, Religion and Place in Popular Music



Lisa Katrine Svendsen

Master Thesis, Institute of Musicology

University of Oslo

April 2013

Acknowledgements

Thanks to my supervisor professor Stan Hawkins for inspiring me during my work with this thesis and for encouraging me to go to South Africa.

Thanks to my mom, Elizabeth Warren, for reading this through and give me some very good advice.

Table of Contents

1	On Musical Revelations- Introduction	5
	Popular Music and Religion	7
	Theorizing Religion in the Contemporary World.....	9
	Theorizing Ideas of Place and Cosmopolitanism	12
	Constructing Identities.....	16
2	Methodological Considerations	20
	Analyzing Music.....	20
	Hermeneutic Readings.....	21
	Semiotics	23
	Analytical Tools	26
3	Zahara and Dj SBU- Lengoma.....	30
	A South African Context	34
	A Song of Religious Transcendence	36
	Two South African Stars	40
	A Gendered Remix	43
4	Gorgoroth- Sign of an Open Eye.....	49
	Satanism, Nordic Mythology and Black Metal	50
	A Horrorfull Play with Imageries	53
	Timbre of Transgression and Melodic Horror.....	56
	Masculinity and Whiteness.....	64
5	Nas- The NYC Don	68
	The Five Percent Nation	68
	Prayers over NYC.....	70
	Tensions between Two Worlds; Paradise and Earth	75
	The Poet, the King, the Don, the God	77
	The Bridge-A Rikers Island.....	81
6	Lady Gaga-Born This Way.....	83
	The Cosmic Birth.....	84
	The Birth of Evil.....	89

The Mother Monster	92
A Dancing Critique.....	93
7 Final Reflections on Musical Revelations	98
 References	 103
Bibliography	103
Videography	109
Internet Sites:	110
Music Example:.....	111

Table of Figures

Figure 1: <i>The Sign of An Open Eye</i> - Rhythmic figure	26
Figure 2: <i>Lengoma</i> -Marimba motive	32
Figure 3: <i>Lengoma</i> -Rhythms	33
Figure 4: <i>Lengoma</i> -Praying gesture	38
Figure 5: Zahara in music video <i>Loliwe</i>	42
Figure 6: DJ Sbu in music video <i>Ndenzeni</i>	42
Figure 7: <i>Lengoma</i> - Zahara singing	45
Figure 8: <i>Lengoma</i> -Dancing men	47
Figure 9: <i>Lengoma</i> -Car drive.....	48
Figure 10: Gorgoroth Clothing.....	54
Figure 11: Spitting Flames.....	54
Figure 12: Crucifixions.....	54
Figure 13: Man and Nature.....	55
Figure 14: Man and Nature.....	55
Figure 15: Mystical Mountains	55
Figure 16: <i>The Sign of an Open Eye</i> - Double power chord	57
Figure 17: <i>The Sign of an Open Eye</i> - Main triplet pattern.....	58
Figure 18: <i>The Sign of an Open Eye</i> - Chromatic bend and tremolo effect	59
Figure 19: <i>The Sign of an Open Eye</i> - Half-tempo feel.....	60
Figure 20: <i>The Sign of an Open Eye</i> - Background vocals	60
Figure 21: <i>The Sign of an Open Eye</i> - Chromatic build-up.....	62
Figure 22: <i>The Sign of an Open Eye</i> - Peak-moment.....	63
Figure 23: <i>The Sign of an Open Eye</i> - 16th pattern in bass drum	63
Figure 24: <i>The Don</i> - Statue of Liberty.....	70
Figure 25: <i>The Don</i> - Loop A	72
Figure 26: <i>The Don</i> - Loop B.....	72
Figure 27: Nas's golden ring	73
Figure 28: <i>The Don</i> - Bass-line.....	75
Figure 29: Nas's Luxury-life.....	75
Figure 30: Nas in ring of fire.....	76
Figure 31: <i>The Don</i> - Dry drum sounds	77
Figure 32: Nas wearing a white suit and reading Buisness Day in his limousine.....	76
Figure 33: <i>Born This Way</i> - Cm9b5 and Ebm-maj7 triplets in prologue	84
Figure 34: Pink upside down triangle.....	84
Figure 35: Pink upright triangle.....	85
Figure 36: <i>Born This Way</i> - brass entrance in prologue.....	86
Figure 37: <i>Born This Way</i> - Celesta and harp triplets	86
Figure 38: Alien Lady Gaga	87
Figure 39: <i>Born This Way</i> - Gaga's birth and peak moment in prologue	88
Figure 40: Evil and insane Lady Gaga.....	91
Figure 41: <i>Born This Way</i> -Refrain.....	95

1 On Musical Revelations- Introduction

A soundtrack from the physiological thriller *Vertigo* (1958) underpins the image of Lady Gaga's blue womb giving birth to an arsenal of slimy heads in a mystical, alien and fictional galaxy. The year is 2011 and *The Mother Monster* is breathing life into a new, utopian generation of monsters. Maj-chord triplets in celesta, vibraphone and harp add a magical, ethereal atmosphere to this extraordinary moment of birth. The motive is familiar; a virgin birth of magnificent proportions permeated by sensibilities connoting the "otherworldly" and divine. Two Christian narratives deeply embedded in western culture and history, the image of the Virgin Mary's Holy Birth and the Creation are being mixed, reconfigured and utilized as a main framework for Lady Gaga's music video, *Born This Way*. Through a dark, dancing, powerful, sexual and bizarre presentation of these religious motives Gaga is playing with Catholic imagery; criticizing, opposing and distorting traditional notions of western, Christian and heteronormative understandings of gender, religion and sexuality. She is a Mother of "otherness", a mother to a 21st century population that no matter ethnicity, sexuality, gender or religious belonging are free from prejudice, equal in a universe where all sense of difference is appreciated and cultivated in a cosmopolitan clash of multiple identities.

A long way from New York, from the Eastern Cape of South Africa, Zahara's heavenly voice has captivated the entire southern part of the African continent. Her song *Lengoma* was remixed by DJ Sbu in 2011 into a South African House hit that became tremendously popular. The accompanying music video was, in contrast to Lady Gaga's fantasy in outer space, located on earth and displays black urban life in Johannesburg. The video offers dream and transcendence as a main trope, playing with imaginary depictions of wealth and living out a luxurious consumerist lifestyle. Repetitive "African" drumbeats and marimba riffs, Zahara's expressive Xhosa song, synths and drum machines constitute a musical makeup that supports a religiousness found in both the lyrics and the trance inducing rhythms. The song creates an imaginary space of transcendence where the harsh realities of life in poverty can be overcome; it preaches a message of hope and faith in God drawn from a black South African, Christian tradition. Zahara is not, an obscure alien monster, but rather a constellation between two feminine figures, a protective naturalized mother-Africa and a cute naive song talent and girl next-door. She is presented in the remix as a stark contrast to and as a confirmation of Dj Sbu's and his male friends' powerful dominance.

These two female artists occupy different platforms where popular music aesthetics negotiate and contribute to the shaping and representation of identities. Many scholars have recognized the importance of this connection and problematized how gendered, sexual, national and ethnic identities are presented through popular music. However, few have considered religion's significant role in this regard. It has often been overlooked, not emphasized or merely forgotten. Many have predicted traditional religion's downfall in an increasingly secularized world, moreover many have ignored the possibility of it playing an important part in something as commercialized, 'profane' and 'secular' as popular music.

Yet, because conventional wisdom has taught us to regard popular musics as trivial forms of secular entertainment, these religious dimensions remain hidden from view, marginalized and misunderstood (Sylvan 2002: 3).

I browsed the internet for popular music videos and found that religious references were, in fact, common in the vast majority of cases. Lady Gaga and Zahara were not exceptional incidents. Religious narratives, imageries and sentiments permeated popular music texts. The popular music scenery thus seemed to work as an arena where religious influences most naturally interfered, influenced and coincided with the music. Moreover it seemed that the musical notions of gender and place, two of the most central facets in constituting peoples identity, were affected by and intertwined with these religious undertones. How does religion play a part in popular music's representation of place and gender?

In an attempt to explore this question I focus on four audiovisual case studies that illustrate different ways religion and popular music effect constructions of identities. The first case explores the music video of South African House artist DJ Sbu's remix of Zahara's song "Lengoma" (2011)¹. I explore how Pentecostal sentiments affect the representation of gender, place and ethnicity. A major emphasis will be on how the music's aesthetic creates a means of religious transcendence. The second case study examines a picture collage put together to the music of the Norwegian Black Metal band Gorgoroth's "Sign of an Open Eye" (2006)². I investigate how Gorgoroth's religious leanings towards Nordic Mythology and Satanism are presented in their music and how it affects their representations of a white masculinity. The third case study concentrates on Nas's music video "The Don" (2012)³. In this case I explore Islam's

¹ DJ Sbu feat. Zahara- *Lengoma*, Accessed 22.04.2013: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0N5gwLnQeBw>

² Gorgoroth- *The Sign of an Open Eye*, Accessed 22.04.2013: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73Za2PVVDcl>

³ Nas- *The Don*, Accessed 22.04.2013: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3wIJ774gJs>

impact on his music and how it plays a part in representing a black, “New York City – masculinity”. Lady Gaga’s music video *Born This Way* (2011)⁴ makes up my fourth and last case study. Here, the use of catholic imagery and her representation of femininity and sexuality will be illuminated.

These cases constitute different genres, national identities and religious orientations and represent an extract of the variety of musical styles and religious leanings found in today’s multifaceted world. I am not trying to illuminate religion's significance in one particular musical genre, culture or location, but rather how religion might be significant in all analysis of popular music, no matter place, genre or religion. This explains my choice of such widely different case-studies. This variation also provides room for discussing and comparing different musical representations. Moreover the cases present well-known, influential and popular artists within their specific genre; hence they are dominating artists with power to impact many people.

Popular Music and Religion

Music can function as a form of religion, music can be used for expressing religious thoughts, music can critique religion, music can portray and discuss religion and use religious narratives as thematic material, music can function as worship or as a way of communicating with the otherworldly or divine. Religion also impacts music in many subtle, not so apparent ways; even music that seemingly doesn’t have any clear connections with religion, like much popular music, may be inspired or influenced by religious music and/or beliefs.

In postmodern pop expressions, cut and paste, collage-like techniques of mixed images and narratives are often utilized (Hawkins 2002, Strinati 1995). Thus, different religious images, narratives, associations might be used as part of this type of aesthetic. Sullivan’s book on popular music and religion *Traces of The Spirit* (2002) uses case studies of subcultures related to various popular music genres to discuss ways in which popular music functions as a form of postmodern religion. Because of the numerous combinations of sacred, secular and profane contemplations in contemporary culture, popular music constitutes one of the new ways in which religion takes form (Ibid:220). Kessler proclaims that; «Music, like religion, has the power to transform human lives and transport people into another time and place» (Kessler 2007: 120). He stresses that music often is used as revelation of something special and otherworldly and that music combines

⁴ Lady Gaga- *Born this Way*, Accessed 22.04.2013: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wV1FrqwZyKw>

two important features in religion; myths, what is said or sung, and ritual, what is performed or done (Loc. Cit.). Popular music appeals with its repetitive rhythms and beats and expressive vocals, providing listeners with the opportunity to experience feelings of transcendence, ecstasy and belonging, similar to religious experiences.

Clearly popular music and religion influence each other, and are interconnected in numerous ways. The focus of this thesis is not on music used for specifically religious purposes, like communicating with the supernatural or gathering people in religious worship, sermons and rituals. The main objective of this thesis will be on investigating religions influence on popular music aesthetics.

There have been many attempts to define religion and there are continuous disagreements as to what focus such a definition should take.

Some have argued that religions exhibit such a great diversity of beliefs, practices, and symbols that one cannot capture them in one definition; others have emphasized that “religion” is a Western invention the meaning of which is differently socially constituted at different times in history and across traditions. Moreover, such general definitions of religion have usually expressed ethnocentric Western views and normative claims in the disguise of universal truths (Riesebrodt 2003:97).

Substantive definitions try to declare what religion is by distinguishing it from other practices; often these definitions become too narrow. By emphasizing the supernatural aspects of religion it might exclude many nonwestern religions that do not have any clear distinction between the supernatural and the worldly. On the other hand functionalist definitions of religion describe it according to how it functions. This definition tends to be quite broad, often including politics, philosophies, popular music cultures or sports, as these phenomena might work in the same way as religion (Kessler 2007:16). There are also several other ways in defining religion, but discussing these goes beyond the scope of this thesis. I have settled on one definition which for the purpose of this thesis proves useful; religion is;

(1) a system of symbols which act to (2) establish powerful, persuasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by (3)formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz 1966:4).

Geertz’s definition focuses on religion as a set of symbol systems that prove powerful in defining the way people live and view their life. This definition is useful when investigating identity formations, as it emphasizes religions effect on peoples understanding of themselves. Further it sees religion as a set of different types of symbols that in different ways can be expressed through or embedded in popular music. This thesis will explore religious expressions tied to five

different religious orientations; Pentecostalism, Satanism, Nordic Paganism, The Five Percent Nation and Catholicism

Similarly the term ‘popular music’ is a broad and defuse category, as it covers a wide array of different musical styles and genres. Within musicology, popular music has often been viewed in opposition to western classical music. It is considered to consist of genres of music that operates outside of the high, institutionalized “art” music forms. ‘Popular music’ is commercially distributed by the music industry to a mass audience. However consumers also take part in defining popular music. According to taste, people purchase and listen to certain types of music offered to them by the music market. Because popular music is controlled largely by the market and consumer choices it provides indicators for understanding contemporary society and evolving cultural trends. It is a good arena for examining how religion is presented in today’s culture. Burnett (1996) calls for a broad definition of popular music;

In summary, we can argue that popular music is self-defined, i.e. music that is popular. [...] This means that, for the music industry, popular music consists of whichever musical styles sell sufficient numbers to be deemed successful or representative of an audience. Success is determined by indices of the music industry such as radio play and phonogram sales. Consequently, sufficient purchases by the youth audience, the main consumers, define what constitute popular music at any given time (Burnett 1996: 37)

Toynbee stresses that popular music refers to many subgenres, directed towards many specific audiences, that together make up a huge category of popular music (Toynbee 2000:125). This thesis explores four of these subgenres; South African House, Norwegian Black Metal, Rap and mainstream Pop.

Theorizing Religion in the Contemporary World

Today a multitude of different religions converge within the same geographical area and cultural environment. Growing mobility and increasing communication create societies with religious diversity. In many places, a range of different religious beliefs operate side by side, interacting, communicating and conflicting with each other, in what scholars have termed religious pluralism (Leirvik 2007). In *Europe: The Exceptional Case* (2002) Grace Davie studies tendencies in religious faith. She concludes that religious faith on most continents is in fact as persistent as ever and increasing, except in Europe where religion's presence is decreasing. «Secularization is essentially a European phenomenon and is extrinsic rather than intrinsic to the modernizing process per se » (Davie 2002: 161). Nevertheless forms of secularization have taken place in most modern societies and this process has had historical significance (Riesebrodt 2003). In

many places secularization has pushed religion away from the public sphere and national politics and made religion largely an individual concern. Fewer countries require its citizens to follow certain belief systems by law, ascribing more freedom to the individual and opening up for new modes of religious faith. This trend results in a type of pick and mix religion, characteristic of postmodernism (Gilhus, Mikaelson 2007).

Kessler stresses that there are different ways of viewing secularization;

One way it is used suggests that secularization marks a gradual process of the loss of social and public influence of religious organizations. Another way suggests that secularization marks a change in traditional religious patterns that involves the increased privatization of religious choice and commitment (Kessler: 2007:302).

I prefer to operate with Kessler's second approach to secularization as it addresses shifts in religious faith rather than simply its decline or disappearance. Of course this secularization process is just one tendency among others, as Smart has asserted; this trend is followed by an oppositional one, where religions are becoming increasingly conservative and institutional (Smart 2003). Kessler suggests that this might be a reaction to religious diversity and secularization, which is deemed threatening towards institutional religion, its power and its claim to objective, divine truth.

The threat to traditional religion is real, and the natural human reaction to threat is to become defensive. So reactionary fundamentalist movements crisscross the landscape of our time, indicating their willingness to fight, even to kill, to preserve what they take to be traditional and divinely ordained order of things (Kessler 2007:302).

Accordingly there are two forces working side by side in the contemporary religious landscape. One opens up for religious diversity and postmodern notions of individual concepts of pick and mix religion while the other is growing increasingly conservative, institutionalized and essentialist. These trends in religious faith in contemporary society are reflected through the four case studies I investigate.

In South Africa, Christianity is experiencing growth. Pentecostal and Charismatic churches play an increasingly significant part in the lives of large parts of the black, but also white, South African population (Anderson 2005, Meyer 2004). The case study of Zahara and DJ Sbu works as a manifestation of this increasingly religiousness-trend. Quite to the contrary, Norway has experienced a decline in religious practitioners, despite the fact that the country is officially a Lutheran Christian country, and up until recently had a state-church, figuratively enough called "the Norwegian church". Some argue that this presence of a state religion has caused many to feel that their religious consciousness is being taken care of by the state (Davie

2002). Others have been critical of the state religion because of its connection to the state and its historical significance in constituting and shaping the countries laws, educational system and moral norms (Smart 2003). Gorgoroth's anti-authority, rebellious musical expression can be seen as a backlash to Norway's Christian state. Rather they find what they believe is a more "real" Norwegianness in spiritual leanings inspired of a pre-Christian Norway and through Satanic, anti-Christian attitudes.

Lady Gaga and Nas are both from USA where Christian faith is still strong although church attendance has decreased some (Davie 2002). Most Americans find Christian beliefs and the church as important moral guides in life. This Christian presence has implications for the nation's politics. Following Muller (1997), Davie states that

[...] religion survives in America as a serious force in politics, not least in form of a conservative religious movement- explicitly committed to traditional Christian values and vigorously opposed to social and political liberalism [...] (Davie 2002:31).

Kessler describes civil religion as «the set of beliefs and rituals that unite the diverse elements of a society into a unifying ideology» (Kessler 2008:228-229). In USA civil religion is often expressed publically through phrases such as 'One nation under God' and 'in God we trust' (Loc. cit.). These publically renowned religious sentiments permeate US society and suggest strong religious metanarratives that take part in shaping moral values. Moreover USAs Israel friendly politics, their violent interference in the middle-east and their fight against Islamic terrorism, most explicitly expressed through the official war on terror, has caused many Americans to fear Muslims and Islam. Thus the relationship between America, Christianity and The Middle-East and Islam has deteriorated. Nas, then, by sympathizing with the middle-eastern concerns and through his black version of Islamic faith opposes the American society's white and Christian domination. Gaga on the other hand presents an underlying Catholic faith and heritage, but she also critiques institutionalized churches and their power, especially when it comes to forwarding prejudice attitudes towards homosexuals and constraining female sexuality. Hence she presents skepticism to some of Christianity's aspects and tries to configure new ways to believe, in a modern USA. Importantly both Nas and Gaga reflect their belonging to New York City, which within USA, is renowned for its very multicultural and multi-religious constellation of people and liberal attitudes towards multifaceted beliefs, cultures, sexualities and ethnicities.

Theorizing Ideas of Place and Cosmopolitanism

Religion and place are connected and important in artists' musical expressions. All of the case studies investigated here embrace certain local, religious particularities. Tim Cresswell stresses the importance of distinguishing between concepts of place and space. Space implies an abstract notion of an area, while place is a space that has become meaningful in terms of human attachment. Hence when I use the term place it implies more of a geographically location with all its social and cultural particularities Ideas of place is however not restricted to notions of geographically limited areas.

Places have space between them. [...] Space, then, has been seen in distinction to place as a realm without meaning- as a 'fact of life' which, like time, produces the basic conditions for human life. When humans invest meaning in a portion of space and then become attached to it in some way (naming is one such way) it becomes a place. Although this basic dualism of space and place runs through much human geography since the 1970s it is confused somewhat by the idea of social space- or socially produced space- which in many ways, plays the same role as place (Cresswell 2004:9-10).

Following Cresswell, there is thus a slightly blurry boundary between notions of social space and place; it is however these concepts which I am most concerned with. Music can in fact be seen as one way in which *spaces* become meaningful; one way in which they become *places*.

Music, then, plays significant part in the way that individuals author space, musical texts being creatively combined with local knowledges and sensibilities in ways that tell particular stories about the local, and impose collectively defined meanings and significance on space (Bennett 2004:3).

Ideas of place are imaginary constructions, shaped and reproduced through people and music. South Africa is not "what it is" in its own intrinsic right. The idea of South Africa as "a stunning beautiful, rainbow nation of diverse ethnicities" is constructed through collective imagination, and reproduced and shaped through cultural expression. Social and cultural constellations of people make places a reality, through creating and imagining them. Music and Religion constitute two means in which ideas of place is negotiated through.

Clearly places are created by cultural practices such as literature, film and music and the investigation of these forms of producing places are a central strand in contemporary human geography.[...] Places are never finished but produced through the reiteration of practices- the repetition of seemingly mundane activities on a daily basis (Cresswell 2004:82)

Collective understandings, memories and performances of places are what one connects to certain spaces or locations. David Harvey argues that constructions of imagined places are a result of collective memories of places and its heritage; ideas of place links people of the past to people of the present. It constitutes memories of the past as well as hopes and desires of the future (Harvey 1996). This is not to say that geographical places don't exist or does not play a

part in our understanding of them. Norway is a cold, rich country that has mountains, oil and snow, but these are merely conditions in which the rest of the nation is built around. The particular “sense of Norway” is largely constructed in our heads through repetitive collective behavior, cultural expressions and representations through media. However one has to be careful not to unconditionally equate place with a homogeneous community and its historical roots. As Doreen Massey emphasizes every place has a constellation of different people, who perceive of place in different ways. Hence place is “imagined” differently by different people, it is not a fixed category limited by rigid boundaries. As an example, Massey mentions how a woman and man's sense of place would be rather different in a small British mining-village during the 1800s. Place, she argues, is rather created through different social relations between people at a specific locus (Massey 1993).

Three categories of place come to mind; the local, the national and the global, all in which, to an extent, are culturally, imaginary categories present in my four case studies. Globalization or “the global” has often been understood as a contrast to, or as an opposite force to notions of the local or the national. It is thought to be an overarching, cultural force, language or collectiveness that goes beyond notions of rigid national and local boundaries. The 21st century is characterized by increasingly interaction between different cultures around the world. Through mass-media and global movements of people there is an exchange of goods, cuisine, economics, popular culture, arts and ideas. This process of globalization and international contact is of course a reality that has become specifically urgent in the age of the internet and mass-communication. However it is at the same time also a cultural construction that permeates our understanding of the world. What is global is also made through ideas of it, presented through media, music and other cultural expressions. Thus although many different influences from various cultures are absorbed into popular music's aesthetics and style, being an effect of globalization, popular music also plays a part in imagining “the global”. One way this idea of the global is conceptualized in my case-studies, is through another idea, namely the idea of urban metropolises or cities. The global is manufactured onto “the city” in a sense making the modern city a manifestation of the global as well as the global is imagined through notions of the urban city. NYC illustrates this sense of “the global” perfectly; the city is partially factually and partially imagined as a metropolitan, modern, liberal, hybridity of different cultures, religions and people. Outside the western part of the world however, “the global” might be considered

specifically western in nature. The term “global” constitutes uneven implications that underpins the world's postcolonial, hierarchical structure; it often favors western culture and western ideas at the cost of cultures from other parts of the world. In Zahara and Dj Sbu's presentation of Johannesburg, the city-images of skyscrapers, cars and materialistic culture works to link the musical expression to a western notion of “the world”; a common modern and “global” culture. This illustrates Massey's point, that perceptions and meanings of place vary from individual to individual, people to people, place to place (Massey 1993).

Nevertheless it is clear that the idea of “the global” and globalization more generally influences popular music. However it is also vital to keep in mind that, the idea of the nation still plays a significant role in cultural modes of expression. Biddle and Knights argue that academic writing on popular music lately have been concerned with the binary nexus between the local and the global without paying much attention to the national, as it has, according to many, become a less dominant force in postmodern society (Biddle and Knights 2007). In postmodernist thought national boundaries are seen as less significant in an increasing globalized and multicultural world. However the nation state continues to play an important role in shaping music as well as music plays an important role in shaping notions of nationality.

Music can be involved in the construction or reconstruction of national identities in both material and symbolic ways. Nation-states continue to promote the idea of music as cultural symbol and/or national product, just as global markets have an interest in perpetuating and commodifying musical difference at the level of nation. Conceptions of national identity and music can range from exclusivist notions of musical essence and origin to those that celebrate diversity and hybridity (O'Flynn 2007:37).

This idea of the national is to various degrees present in all the four cases I examine. Through playing with sonic and visual characteristics associative of South Africa, Zahara and Dj Sbu undoubtedly negotiate ideas of the national. They do not only present a South African expression, but also play a part in constructing, shaping and forming an imaginary or utopian notion of what South Africa is as a nation, and what it means to be South African.

Rather than operating with this rigid nexus between the local, national and global, I find that much of today's popular culture is a more fluid one, negotiating local and national uniqueness at the same time as it works in a global landscape.

Nas sympathizes with and speaks to hip hoppers, rap fans and Muslims all around the world at the same time as he emphasizes his local belonging to Queens Bridge, NYC. Similarly, Lady Gaga's expression is not merely about an overarching globalized message of love and acceptance, but as much about differentiating and representing a certain uniqueness and identity

through her own religious and ethnic belonging. She is a global phenomenon, a major, mainstream pop star, preaching of equality to a global population simultaneously as she performs the Italian and catholic girl from the multifaceted NYC. Zahara and DJ Sbu speak from a South African reality, but utilize a global language through the appropriation of the house genre, also communicating to a wider transnational house-culture. Through differentiating themselves from other House- expressions by articulating their South African belonging they are strategically marketing themselves as unique to a wider global audience.

Peoples in places therefore try to differentiate their place from other places and become more competitive [...]. Within this process, the selling of place, using all the artifices of advertising and image construction that can be mustered, has become of considerable importance [...]. Investment in consumption spectacles, the selling of images of places, competition over the definition of cultural and symbolic capital, the revival of vernacular traditions associated with places as a consumer attraction, all become conflated in inter-place competition (Harvey 1996:298).

Gorgoroth also speaks, through their genre, to a global community of black metal fans. Norwegian black metal is, in fact, Norway's biggest musical export; hence Gorgoroth's national particularity and theatrical spectacle might like Zahara and Dj Sbu's work as a good market strategy.

Beck and Sznaider claim that the duality between national and international and the local and the global have in later years merged into new forms of cosmopolitanism that are not spatially fixed but rather characterized by fluidity.

[...] globalization is something taking place 'out there', cosmopolitanization happens 'from within'. Whereas globalization presupposes, cosmopolitanization dissolves the 'onion model' of the world, where the local and the national form the core and inner layer and the international and the global form the outer layers. [...] Cosmopolitanization should be chiefly conceived of as globalization from *within*, as *internalized* cosmopolitanism. We can frame our questions so as to illuminate the transnationality that is arising inside nation-states (Beck and Sznaider 2006: 9).

Accordingly I find *cosmopolitanism* a more useful term to operate with when describing the popular music and religious scenery I have been investigating. Cosmopolitanism differs from globalization in the sense that it comes from within a specific cultural tradition and does not merely represent a rigid global universal and transnational language (Regev 2007, Beck and Sznaider 2006). It recognizes national and cultural uniqueness or otherness as part of its cultural expression.

Aesthetic cosmopolitanism is the condition in which the representation and performance of ethno-national cultural uniqueness are largely based on art forms that are created by contemporary technologies of expression, and whose expressive forms include stylistic elements knowingly drawn from sources exterior

to indigenous traditions. As such, aesthetic cosmopolitanism is not the exception in contemporary cultural practices, but rather the normal and the routine (Regev 2007: 126).

A collective uniqueness is emphasized through popular music in terms of nationhood, ethnicity, gender and religion simultaneously as it embraces an idea of a global culture that overarches national, religious and ethnic boundaries. Rather than merely reflecting globalization, the artists “imagines” or “makes” the global through playfully utilizing musical characteristics available to them from a global palette of musical and visual options. Stokes states about cosmopolitanism that it

Invites us to think about how people in specific places and at specific times have embraced the music of others, and how, in doing so, they have enabled music styles and musical ideas, musician and musical instruments to circulate (globally) in particular ways. [...] it restores human agencies and creativities to the scene of analysis and allows us to think of music as a process in the making of “worlds”, rather than a passive reaction to global “systems”. (Stokes 2007:6)

It is in this flux cosmopolitan landscape, rather than a rigid globalized/localized dichotomy in which Lady Gaga, Zahara, DJ Sbu, Nas and Gorgoroth and so many other major pop stars find themselves configuring, presenting and acting out their identities.

Constructing Identities

Identity and *subjectivity* are socially and culturally constituted and expressed, shaped and represented through musical discourses (Born 2000). *Identity* is how one presents oneself to the world and how one is understood by others. *Subjectivity* is how one feels and understands oneself as a person; it is our personal comprehension of oneself. *Agency* is strongly connected to notions of subjectivity as it refers to freedom of will, creativity and power enabled through actions; expressions and choices of what circumstances afford. This means that individuals act according to their possibilities and perform their identity as subjects through agency.

Stan Hawkins stresses that identity formations are constructed through notions of sameness and difference (Hawkins 2002). Shaping both individual and collective identities relies on differentiating oneself from other identity groupings or individuals. «Asserting one’s difference is therefore about stating an identity with a group that perceives itself differentially» (Ibid: 13). These ways of forming both collective and individual identity, are often manifested through expressing, feeling and identifying with specific social and cultural aspects of society, like through notions of place and ethnic belonging.

Identitetsdannelsen foregår alltid innenfor en bestemt social, historisk og kulturell kontekst. Vi lærer gjennom oppveksten noen av de dominerende diskursene som er framtreddende i de spesielle sosiale omstendigheter vi lever under (Ruud 1997:19)

Even Ruud highlights the way our identity is linked to personal experiences and memories.

Through emotions and our bodily experience with society and in relation to other people, one reflects on and negotiates who one wishes to be, where one wishes to belong and moreover how one wants others to perceive us.

Identitet er med andre ord ikke noe som kommer til oss ferdig utformet, men noe som preges av vår egen refleksivitet. Identitet er noe som konstrueres samtidig som vi utformer en støpeform for hvem eller hva vi ønsker å være, hvor vi vil tilhøre (Ruud 1997:53).

Hence personal and collective identities are shaped in relation to places, other people and emotional and bodily experiences. Musical and religious experiences are in many ways similar; they can connect a person to something above themselves, give them a sense of being part of something beyond everyday life. It is a feeling that is linked to memories and tied up to our understanding of our selves, it is a transpersonal space. Following Abraham Maslow's ideas on peak experiences within psychology, Ruud states that «the transpersonal space» is;

[...] noe som er forankret utenfor oss selv, i noe grensesprengende, noe som er bortenfor de nære tids-romdimensjoner. Mange vil gjerne oppleve seg selv som en del av noe større, en helhet, en sammenheng (Ruud 1997:175).

Ruud especially emphasizes religious dimensions as a significant part of this transpersonal space; it is something outside everyday life, place and nature. Through religious experience people feel connected to some sense of overarching spiritual energy. It creates a meaning in life that together with other aspects is an important part of constituting identities. In Dj Sbu and Zahara's case this religious experience of transcendence is licensed through the music. The music makes available an opportunity for the listener to feel this transpersonal space. In fact, by combining musical and religious expressions it works as an emotional powerful medium on two levels. Their music, the visual futures of the music video and the star personas combined with the set of memories, experiences and presumptions the listeners carries with him/her, work together, on so many levels, in representing and shaping identity.

One of the most significant parts of our identity and subjectivity is gender, as it is something everyone has to relate to. Gendered constructions are embedded in all cultures and relate to how bodies of different sexes are configured and performed in society, not the least through music and religion.

Although gender takes different forms and different importance across cultures, it is a bundle of discourses that in some way help to organize every culture. In most cultures, these discourses are organized by two main archetypes of gender, femininity and masculinity (Kiesling 2005: 700)

As Kiesling articulates, most societies construct gender around notions of masculinity and femininity, associative of and connected to, but not identical with man and woman, male and female bodies' respectively. One can be female and perform masculinity and male and perform femininity; gender is something you do rather than something one is (Kiesling 2005). Thus while essentialists insist that gender constitutes naturalized or fixed categories, this post-modernist perspective argues that identities are never fixed, but always flexible, performative and tied up to questions of power and agency.

Judith Butler proclaims this constructionist position, insisting that gender is a social construction, a result of performance (Butler 1993). When examining gendered identities in this thesis it will be in line with Butlers understanding of identity and subjectivity as categories of performativity. Butler claims that performativity exists in and through constraints; constraints are what make performativity of gender possible.

The "performative" dimension of construction is precisely the forced reiteration of norms. In this sense, then, it is not only that there are constraints to performativity; rather, constraint calls to be rethought as the very condition of performativity. Performativity is neither free play nor theatrical self-presentation; nor can it simply equated with performance. Moreover, constraint is not necessarily that which sets a limit to performativity; constraint is, rather, that which impels and sustains performativity (Butler 1993: 94-95).

Following Butler, one of the major constraints in which subjectivities are performed through is the repetition of social constructed norms. She also argues that taboos, threats, institutional restrictions and prohibitions make up additional constraints in which one performs notions of gender and sexuality according to.

[...], I would suggest that performativity cannot be understood outside of a process of iterability, a regularized and constrained repetition of norms. And this repetition is not performed *by* a subject; this repetition is what enables a subject and constitutes the temporal condition for the subject. This iterability implies that "performance" is not a singular "act" or event, but a ritualized production, a ritual reiterated under and through constraint, under and through the prohibition and taboo, with the threat of ostracism and even death controlling and compelling the shape of the production, but not, I will insist, determining it fully in advance (Ibid: 94-95).

Although Butler sees the subject's performance of gender and sexuality as limited by constraints and rituals she does not undermine the importance of agency as it is acted through subjects will and choice. Rather, agency is performed within the possibilities and constraints available to each subject. This means that agency cannot be freely acted out abstractedly, outside cultural norms and socialized conditions. Subjects exist only through cultural and social regulated possibilities

for action, in which they attend to (ibid: 7). Butler argues that subjects exist only as performative constructions, this however, does not imply that subjects or bodies are less real, or moreover that gender or sexuality does not exist, rather, Butler discusses *ways* in which genders exists and ways gendered bodies have been configured over time. As a major force in almost all contemporary cultures music plays a significant role in this regard.

The “homology” model of earlier sub-cultural theory advocates that music deterministically reflects social structures and cultural identities. In opposition, Frith argues that music has a formative role by also shaping sociocultural identities.

[...] the issue is not how a particular piece of music or a performance reflects the people, but how it produces them, how it creates and constructs an experience – a musical experience, an aesthetic experience- that we can only make sense of by *taking on* both a subjective and a collective identity (Frith 1996 : 109)

Indeed, through experiencing music, the listener is actually experiencing identity, by responding to the performance, performers and other fans. Musical expression makes and offers a collective identity for its listeners to feel, reject or take a part of. Hawkins argues that concepts of identity are constructed by experiencing music through the body and linking it to formations of identities. This process of identity formation further defines our conceptions of subjectivity, thus ourselves as individuals;

Moreover it is the continuous processes of identity formation that define our own positions and conceptions on subjectivity. When enacted through musical performance, it is as if the fiction of Selfhood extends notions of identity, not least when *différance* willfully subverts normative gender positions (Hawkins 2002:18).

In line with Butler then, music and other cultural expressions, like religion, are social norms, repetitive encounters, constraints or cultural conditions that is afforded to us and that play a part in forming identities and ultimately our subjectivity.

Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers the body, time and sociability, experiences which enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives [...] Identity is thus necessarily a matter of ritual, it describes ones place in a dramatized pattern of relationships-one can never really express oneself 'autonomously'. Self-identity *is* cultural identity; claims to individual difference depend on audience appreciation, on shared performing and narrative rules (Frith 1996: 125).

Having emphasized the importance of music's *shaping power* in our understandings of ourselves, it is also clear that music *reflects* identities that are already embedded in cultural and social reality. Musical aesthetics work as a shaping expression as well as a reflecting expression; these two means are almost inseparable and always inter-related (Born 2000:31-32). Thus gendered, religious, national, ethnic and sexual identities are important for the way the music sounds as well as the musical expression is important for understanding how identities are shaped.

Consequently exploring identities through musical texts will be the most important aspect of this thesis.

2 Methodological Considerations

Analyzing Music

Investigating the complexities surrounding popular music, religion and identity formations requires a well-planned approach. This thesis will analyze popular music ‘texts’; «Textual analysis is concerned with identifying and analyzing the formal qualities of texts, their underpinning structures and constituent characteristic» (Shuker 1998:272). In this thesis, ‘text’ does not simply refer to lyrics, but rather to all meaningful features related to the particular music being studied. Popular music texts are quite diverse, and include recordings, record sleeve covers, concerts, fan-club merchandise, posters (Shuker 1998) and the main focus of this thesis; music videos. Hawkins states that meaning evolves in the dialogical process between different texts. Thus, music-analysis should be concerned with how music relates to other texts in a process of intertextuality.

Only at the point of contact between texts does the first dialogic stage of understanding take place. And indeed behind this intertextual contact are the identities that live to tell, fill in, or receive the multiplicity of the narratives it unfolds. Clearly, the trajectory of the pop song is impossible without the concatenation of voices that bring together different and irreducible meanings through forms and utterances (Hawkins 2002:23)

Analyzing audiovisual texts, like music videos, can illuminate how visual imagery is connected the sound and how bodies are presented, imagined and remembered through repetitive visual and sonic encounters.

[...] the audio-visual text, a conveyer of conventions and practices, is the product of representation, positioning both the performer and spectator in disparate ways.[...]Furthermore, recording technology induces repeated listening(and viewing) that is conditional on familiarity and memory. What seems at issue here is the dialogic relationship of visual and sonic material as established by the viewer as much as by the performer (Hawkins 2009:41).

Some have questioned analysis of musical texts as an approach to studying popular music, due to its tendency to focus on the production of music rather than the perceptual aspects of listening. Frith for example is more concerned with the experiences of listeners than the way in which texts or musical performances are represented to the listeners (Frith 1998:204). However, because the

representations in musical texts are connected to how listeners experience their own emotions and selves (Born 2000, Dibben 1999, Frith 1998, Hawkins 2002,). I find textual analysis a relevant method for the study of popular music.

There are several different approaches to studying musical texts and many of them are widely debated. Traditional formalist analysis has been criticized for its “objective”, almost abstractive focus on inner musical structures and aesthetics. Further, formalist analysis is not considered appropriate when applied to popular music, as it employs terms and concepts borrowed from the classical music tradition which involves a different historical and musical focus. Schenkerian analysis has been criticized for its reductive approach, reducing the musical structures to a set of ‘core’ harmonic elements that presumably carry the essence of the entire work, thus neglecting the importance of a range of other prominent musical features like lyrics, texture, timbre and melodic lines. Both these structuralist approaches are moreover useless for investigating visual aspects, which are vital when investigating audiovisual texts. In contrast, hermeneutic analysis opens up for investigating visual features, but has been criticized for emphasizing surrounding cultural aspects and not focusing enough on the musical sounds and structures. Hermeneutic approaches have also been accused of inducing highly speculative and subjective interpretations (Middleton 2000:1-20). Semiotic approaches have been critiqued for inducing extra-musical meaning onto musical structures, when presumably meanings evolve only through cultural use. Accordingly the challenge lies in finding a procedure of analysis that avoids the pitfalls of either extreme structuralism or extreme hermeneutics. Since this thesis seeks to examine audiovisual texts and how musical expression can generate extra-musical meaning, hermeneutic and semiotic readings seem the most appropriate. These two approaches acknowledge that musical sounds and structures are meaningful parameters that carry underlying narratives derived from the surrounding culture, which produces them.

Hermeneutic Readings

In the groundbreaking article from 1980, «How We Got into Analysis, and How to get out» Joseph Kerman criticized the formalist and structuralist analysis that dominated musicology in the post war period. He requested hermeneutic, interpretive readings that considered the historical, social and cultural contexts surrounding the musical texts and argued that musical meaning could not be derived from inner formal structures alone. Kerman stressed that formalist approaches often claimed objectivity, postulating ultimate truths about musical works by

analyzing inner musical structures resulting in canons of autonomous works considered to be of better quality.

From the standpoint of the ruling ideology, analysis exists for the purpose of demonstrating organicism, and organicism exists for the purpose of validating a certain body of works of art (Kerman 1980:315).

Kerman's critique paved the way for at the time new post-structuralist approaches to analysis and was crucial for the development of New Musicology and Critical Musicology. In *Feminine Endings* (1991) Susan McClary follows Kerman's request by stressing that music always has embedded ideological and cultural connotations. McClary finds narratives in the music, rooted in western, patriarchal history concerning politics of gender, race and sexuality. She focuses on reading how and what these musical narratives signify, what they can tell us about the culture in which they operate, and how these narratives work in formation of subjectivity (McClary 1991: 12-16). She asserts that representations of gender in musical structures are deeply embarked in society and that these often are *unconsciously* comprehended and performed, making the need for investigation crucial;

Yet they are perhaps the most powerful aspects of musical discourses, for they operate below the level of deliberate signification and are thus usually reproduced and transmitted without conscious intervention. They are the habits of cultural thought that guarantee the effectiveness of the music-that allow it to "make sense"-while they remain largely invisible and apparently immutable (McClary 1991: 16).

Treitler argues that the field of musicology loses its purpose if the musical works are considered merely as cultural artifacts that only work to signify other extra, musical meanings. Accordingly musicology like anthropology becomes a study mainly concerned with the surrounding cultures rather than the music itself. Treitler criticizes post-structuralist approaches to analysis as he fears that the music, as an aesthetic object, might lose its significance as it is contextualized and victim of postmodernist relativism. He fears that;

If we do not accept such provisionally autonomous status for the musical work, we risk reducing it to a sign and rendering it transparent to the (extra musical) meaning whose explication will have become the ultimate aim for musical study: that is, for all practical purposes, we risk its disappearance as an aesthetic object once it has done its job signifying (Treitler 1999:313).

I believe that it is essential to examine the historical and cultural contexts in which the music becomes meaningful. It is through cultural situated bodies that one attends to and experiences music and ultimately there are cultural reasons for how the music's aesthetic and structure is formed and emotionally perceived. Geertz argues that all meaning in art evolves, not through inner structures, but through cultural and social patterns of use.

[...] the definition of art in any society is never wholly intra-aesthetic, and indeed but rarely more than marginally so. The chief problem presented by the sheer phenomenon of aesthetic force, in whatever form and in result of whatever skill it may come, is how to place it within the other modes of social activity, how to incorporate it into the texture of a particular pattern of life (Geertz 1976:97).

This does not mean that the inner musical structures, forms and relations do not matter. These features are of major importance for the musical expression and can tell us much about the historical period and the cultural condition in which the music is made and heard.

Besides the challenge of not letting cultural aspects overshadow the significance of musical structures and sounds, hermeneutic approaches presents another minor obstacle. By ‘searching for’ certain narratives in correspondents with personal, ideological hypothesis in the musical structures, rather than focusing primarily on the musical structures and subsequently finding their meanings and agendas, there is the possibility that the analysis only gives answers to what the interpreter *wants* to see and hear in the music. Nevertheless McClary’s readings are based on how narratives have been developed historically and socially over time, thus her readings, although subjective, are presumably shared by others either consciously or subconsciously. No musical reading can avoid being subjective and culturally influenced (Walser 2003); therefore McClary’s approach is no less objective than any formalist or structuralist reading. Both in strict formalist analysis and hermeneutic readings subjective influences play a part. I suggest that, rather than viewing subjective influences as negative obstacles for research, one should consider it productive because it opens up many different perspectives, readings and possible understandings of ways music works. It goes in depth on particular subject-matters and can help find otherwise hidden aspects of the music. In this thesis, for instance, I will try to find religious meanings, connotations and narratives in popular music. This subjective agenda can help illuminate specific concerns in popular music research from a new and different angle that in turn can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon as a whole.

Semiotics

Philip Tagg states that hermeneutics and formalist, non-referential approaches might function complementary through semiotic readings;

In this way it will be possible to establish relations (extragenerically) between given items of musical code and their respective fields of extramusical association and (congenerically) between these various individual parts of the musical code as processual structures (Tagg 1982:78).

Tagg approaches semiotic analysis of popular music through dividing musical elements into smaller units or motifs that he calls *musemes*. Further he outlines methods for reading meanings

into these musemes by investigating how they relate to other extra musical expressions. Tagg substitutes the different musemes with others musical elements in order to find out what musical parameters are the most essential for the musical character as a whole; which parameters are carriers of the texts most vital meanings and connotations.

Tagg argues for instance that specific chords like *minor add nine chords* and *half diminished chords* signify feelings of anguish (Tagg 2004). These chords are frequently used in the prologue to Gaga's music video «Born This Way» ascribing the text with an underlying dramatic, dreadful and disturbing atmosphere. These connotations underpin the agony-filled moment of birth which Gaga seeks to portray visually. By substituting these chords with other chords, triads in root position for instance, one sees how vital and distinctive the half-diminished and add-nine chords are in creating this unstable, anxious and mystical atmosphere. Hence by examining such relations, one can get a greater knowledge of the meanings, significations and representations in the music.

Richard Middleton presents the most renowned critique of Tagg's semiotic approach in *Studying Popular Music* (1990). He argues that Tagg's approach is about illuminating musical content for the purpose of either confirming or falsifying musical interpretation. Hence the music is considered to have some sort of "right" or "wrong" meaning, according to specific cultural conventions that is. Music cannot inherit meaning; meaning is first constructed through listeners and through how the music is used socially (Feld 1984). Further, because the substitution of smaller units opposed to bigger ones, result in smaller overall changes in musical "meaning", Middleton argues that «The technique is much better at demonstrating, ranking and comparing the distinctive contributions of suprasegmental parameters than those of syntagmatic units » (Middleton 1990:182). He stresses that because Tagg's method is more functional when it comes to focusing on larger musical parameters, rather than smaller units and alterations, it works best in identifying specific generic style-codes rather than meanings within a specific text in a specific style. Middleton also finds that Tagg's semiotic approach is largely dependent on extra-musical associations such as visual imagery and descriptive lyrics and that it mostly draws its musical associations from the western classical musical tradition and conventions (Ibid: 234). Another and, I find, more significant problem lies in the fact that much music relies on and derives its meaning from the relationship between and repetition of different musical variables (Middleton 1990:183). Hence substituting musical units separately might not capture the way

such elements work in relation to other elements in a process. For instance, a chord might seem insignificant to replace, as well as a certain timbre or a specific dynamic, but these parameters might be meaningful when put together, moreover they might become meaningful through repetition or concepts of musical variations and reconfigurations.

Clifford Geertz argues that semiotics should be more concerned with hermeneutics and interpretation and not merely of segmented signs as a communicative code- system to be decoded (Geertz 1976).

If we are to have a semiotics of art [...], we are going to have to engage in a kind of natural history of signs and symbols [...]. Such signs and symbols, such vehicles of meaning, play a role in the life of society, or some part of society, and it is that which in fact gives them their life. Here too, meaning is use, or more carefully arises from use, and it is by tracing out such uses [...] that we are going to be able to find out anything general about them (Geertz 1976:118).

Walser similarly states about Tagg that «he too often ignores or marginalizes both the political economy of popular music and its actual operations in social contestation» (Walser 1993:38).

Tagg's interpretations do not pay fully attention to the surrounding social dynamics, «musicians and fans are dehumanized into “Emitters” and “Receivers”» (Ibid: 39). Walser states that;

Underpinning all semiotic analysis is, recognized or not, a set of assumptions about cultural practice, for ultimately music doesn't have meanings; people do. There is no essential, foundational way to ground musical meaning beyond the flux of social existence (Walser 1993:31).

However, following Tagg, one needs to consider the sounds and their connotation to understand musical representations. Accordingly, one has to examine the music in order to understand the culture. Tagg's approach thus works well to investigate the symbolic meaning of specific musical aspects, and how they affect the musical style and relate to visual and other extra musical segments. However it is important to have Middleton's critique in mind when employing such a semiotic approach. The music should not merely be segmented into meaningful bits and pieces, rather the musical text should be read as a whole, were the musical elements relate to each other in a larger aesthetical expression and to the social reality and cultural dynamics surrounding it. When applying textual analysis in this thesis, it will therefor draw inspiration from both semiotics and hermeneutics, focusing on the musical and visual features and how they work in a process of intertextuality within specific cultural and sociological frameworks.

Analytical Tools

Middleton discusses several problematic areas when it comes to handling musical features in the analysis of popular music. «Traditionally, musicology is good with pitch structures and harmony, much less good with rhythm, poor with timbre, and this hierarchy is arguably not congruent with that obtaining in most popular music» (Middleton 2000:4). When reading popular music one has to find ways to deal with such concepts as rhythm, timbre, texture and expression. Language is of course the most used and developed system for describing, communicating and analyzing any phenomenon and will therefore be the most prominent analytical tool in this thesis.

Turning to the use of language as a means of analytical elucidation, 'it is often said that "writing about music is like dancing about architecture, to which I would reply that dancing about architecture might be very illuminating if we all danced as much as we use language. [...] We have language, which is, like music, an incredibly powerful and nuanced system for making sense of things and communicating our understandings (Walser 2003:23).

Besides the use of language there are also several other precise tools for reading and visualizing popular music features. Visual representations of music, like sonograms and spectrums as well as modern technological equipment for tracking movements involved in the music perceiving and receiving have made the possibilities even more varied. Because I have limited knowledge with these relatively new tools for visualizing and analyzing sound, I have chosen to make use of a more traditional representation system; *notation*.

Notation is a highly developed, yet approximate symbol-system for representing musical parameters like pitches and rhythmic figures. Notation works especially well for analyzing musical features which are difficult or complicated to describe through language, like melody, harmony, meter and basic rhythmic figures. The example below illustrates how notation can be useful in visualizing a concrete rhythmic pattern.



Figure 1: *The Sign of An Open Eye*- Rhythmic figure

The excerpt portrays a main rhythmic figure in drums and guitar that permeates Gorgoroth's «The Sign of An Open Eye». The example gives a precise visual indicator of several important parameters at once; the 12/8 meter, the triplet grouping of the eights, the articulated bass drum on

the first and third beat and the deep register of the two open fifths stacked on top of another in guitar. This shows that, in many cases, notation-symbols can give clear and more precise depictions of musical parameters than long, complicated linguistic explanations. However notation as a tool for investigating and depicting popular music has some drawbacks.

Middleton stresses that; «'Notational centrality' [...] tends to equate the music with a score. This leads to an overemphasis on features that can be notated easily (such as fixed pitches) at the expense of others which cannot (complex rhythmic detail, pitch nuance, sound qualities) » (Middleton 1990:105). Another problem lies in the fact that one has to be trained in notation in order to understand the music in terms of it. Middleton also argues that «the score comes to be seen as 'the music', or perhaps the music in an ideal form. In one stroke it downgrades the vagaries of performance, the productive significance of variants, and the influence of performance context; practice is frozen into symbol» (Loc. Cit.). Thus notation has its shortcomings when representing features like performer idiolect, non-standard pitches, rhythmic nuances, timbre, expressive qualities, articulation nuances, electric instrumental effects and recording effects such as sustain, decay and reverb. Accordingly notation can work within the western and classical tradition with its focus on harmony, form and melodic lines, while it is inadequate when applied to popular music.

To some extent I disagree with several of Middleton's arguments. Firstly western classical music does inherit many of the qualities Middleton mentions as prominent in popular music. Classical music is not ripped for timbre, rhythmic, and expressive nuances, moreover not all classical music is based on 'traditional' tonality and harmony. Think only of the wide range of different styles from different historical periods in classical music; there are rubato tempos, different emphasis on tonality (for example modal, atonal, and functional tonality); there are many different attacks, pitch nuances, effects etc. Further classical musicians add personal touch, expression and performance-idiolect to the music, according to the cultural conventions within that specific music culture, just like popular music performers do. Similarly, much popular music inherit complex harmony, chord progressions, melodic lines and thematic developed material based on "traditional tonal" scales and chord-progressions. Even more crucial, many of today's music genres are largely influenced by one another; hence classical music, popular music as well as other genres affects each other in ways that blur the clear generic distinctions. The division of different focuses between popular and classical music is not as simple as Middleton puts it.

Therefore, although notation is not an exact representation of sound, it can prove very useful as a visual and symbolic indicator of how sounds are structured with respect to melody, rhythm and harmony in both classical and popular music. If complex rhythmic figures and pitches occur, notation can be marked in different ways to emphasize certain irregularities and words can be used to give a more detailed and nuanced description.

Thus notation works well as a supplementary tool in my interpretive readings. Although hermeneutic analysis constitutes my main methodological approach I do also incorporate some self-ethnographic reflections in the second Chapter on Zahara and DJ Sbu. It is clearly not any formal empirical ethnographic work, but includes some reflections and experiences I made for myself when visiting South Africa. I found this as a good starting point to exploring South African musical expressions, as the country and culture was very new and foreign to me. This is however the only case-study in which such a half-empirical self-ethnographic perspective is incorporated to any large degree. Consequently this case turned out to go deeper into investigating the cultural surroundings of the society than in the other cases. In the other three cases I focus more on the musical details of the specific audio-visual texts by reading them more chronologically from A to B. My hermeneutic readings in all the four case-studies is yet highly interdisciplinary and draws on literature from a variety of academic fields; musicology, gender-studies, cultural-studies, the study of religion and sociology.

My first case-study is especially concerned with how ideas of place and religion, in this case, black Pentecostal South Africa, is presented through Zahara and DJ Sbu's music video to *Lengoma*. Zahara's lyrics and warm, deep and emotional voice speak of hope for a poverty-struck black South African population through lyrically focusing on prayers and the idea of connecting the listeners and Zahara's own spirits to other higher, subliminal powers. This is clearly inspired by Pentecostals emphasis on a personal connection to and ecstatic experience of God through the Holy Spirit. The rhythmical, trance-inducing house beats managed by DJ Sbu fits this Pentecostal idea of ecstatic states. The polyrhythmic groove, underlying Zahara's voice works to create an atmosphere where the listener can do exactly that; get lost in religious transcendence. Through focusing on the music's Pentecostal undertones, I explore ways black South African gendered identities are negotiated and represented. Specifically the representation of Zahara and Dj Sbu are put up against each other and mark the unequal power-relations between the gendered bodies seen in the video. The black men present a South African

homosociality while the women fall into somewhat stereotypical female figures outside this male community.

The second case-study jumps from the very south to the very north of the globe. It looks at Gorgoroth, a Norwegian black metal band, and how Satanism and north mythology is presented in the musical aesthetics of “Sign of an Open Eye”. I look specifically at how lyrics, timbre, rhythm and melodic characteristics underpin a presentation of a particular white and Nordic masculinity. Gorgoroth’s lyrics are permeated by religious sentiments, in fact, their lyrics is the most religiously explicit of all the four case-studies. They speak directly from a satanic position, expressing their ideological beliefs through overt calling on Satan. Their use of an extremely distorted, deep, monstrous vocal evokes stereotypical notions of a devil-like, unpleasant and un-human creature. Their use of open power chords works to create a sensation of something massive, powerful and dark, evocative of both Satanic dark forces as well as Nordic heathen sensibilities found in the aggressiveness of the warrior-Viking. Melodically chromatic melody-lines and its emphasis on the “horrific” half-step connote satanic notions of hell. The distorted sound of the guitars and primitive production works as a rebellious timbre of power and transgression. It works to support the overall message; to let go of your inner forces, embrace Satanism and your natural human state and achieve complete freedom from society’s Christian norms and restrictions.

The third case presents Nas and his music video “The Don”. This case, like the fourth and last case reads the musical text from beginning to end, analyzing different ways in which gender and religion is presented narratively. Here I am specifically concerned with illustrating how the Five Percent Nation, an Islamic oriented religious leaning, affects Nas's presentation of identity. I try to point to ways that these religious undertones convey an afro-centric attitude that reinforces Nas's presentation of a black NYC rapper. The monotonous vocal-samples in Nas’s hit are repeated in such a manner that they connote Islamic prayer recitations of the Quran. A focus on melody and singing, or music in general, is considered haram (sinful) by many Muslim schools and communities as it moves the focus away from religion and Allah to bodily, human pleasure and emotion. The samples used in this text avoid the use of all large melodic intervals; rather they repeat one pitch with only a slight variation in intonation, keeping intact the Islamic sensibility and forwarding the rap and the importance of poetry, knowledge and the spoken word within Five Percent Ideology. Islamic references thus color the text, working as one part among

others that confirms Nas's cultural identity and belonging.

The last case-study constitutes a textual analysis of Lady Gaga's music video “Born This Way”. The video and chapter is divided into two, where the first part constitutes the prologue where Lady Gaga manages to distort any normal conception of femininity through playing with catholic narratives. This part is sonically underpinned by Bernard Herrmann’s film-music to the psychological thriller *Vertigo*. Through the use of this film-music Lady Gaga manages to create a hypnotic and disturbing atmosphere underbuilding her twisted version of the virginity birth. The use of dim and Maj7 chords and tremolo effects gives the text an unsettled and dynamic feeling while harp and celesta make up a magical timbre. Her reverbed voice is associative of something un-earthly, overarching and powerful, fitting the presentation of herself as a creator in her distorted narrative of the Christian creation. The second part of the video incorporates futuristic synth sounds to a danceable beat fitting the typical notion of a gay anthem. Thus her reconfiguration of the creation and the virgin birth and the hit's references to the gay community can be seen as a critique of Catholicism’s and Christianity’s view on homosexuality and the female body.

3 Zahara and Dj SBU- Lengoma

Lengoma (meaning *song* in Xhosa) is one of the tracks featured on afro-pop singer and songwriter Zahara’s (Bulelwa Mkutukana) bestseller, debut and double platinum album *Loliwe* (2011). The album’s popularity in South Africa was immense and worked as a springboard for Zahara’s extreme success and fame within, not only South Africa, but large parts of the sub-Saharan continent. In 2011 DJ Sbu (Sibusiso Leope), also working as Zahara’s manager, did a remix of *Lengoma*, creating a South African house-version of the song that became one of the year’s most popular hits in South Africa, winning a Music Award for best Remix of the year⁵. Featuring two of South Africa’s most popular artists and belonging to the popular South African House-genre, the hit also reflects a Christian undertone making it a perfect site for exploring how popular music influences constructions of black South African identities.

A captivating, pounding house beat, dense synth sounds, a melodic marimba motive and syncopated African drumbeats underlies Zahara’s deep and expressive voice. The music video is

⁵ South African Music Awards, accessed 22.04.2013 : <http://samusicawards.co.za/profiles/blogs/first-winners-shine-on-night-one-of-the-18th-annual-mtn-south-afr>

in black and white photography and starts out picturing a fancy car with a nicely dressed black couple pulling up to a hotel. The couple leaves the car and gives the keys to DJ Sbu who is working as a car guard. He starts cruising around in the car through the urban landscapes of Johannesburg, singing, dancing, playing music and enjoying a luxury life with fellow black South Africans. The video ends with DJ Sbu fast asleep in the car and the “drive of happiness” seems to have only been a dream. When the owner returns DJ Sbu is brutally awakened from his imaginary world and watches the irritated car owner drive away, leaving him back in his lower class occupation as a car-guard.

The hit clearly inhabits a critical and political undertone through the focus on a South African society with deep economic inequalities. DJ Sbu's dream of the luxury life is connected to the ownership of the expensive and fancy car. The car becomes a symbol of wealth as well as a vehicle for dreaming or voyaging away from the realities of poor life. Peterson emphasizes how the idea of flight has become a common trope among Kwaito-artists to escape the entrapment of ghetto life, crime and poverty in the South African townships.

Given the experience and violent anxieties of entrapment, many kwaito artists are equally obsessed with thinking through or dreaming about the possibilities of flight which is often associated with the attainment of success and a sense of belonging. The obsession with making it good involves a desire for recognition, legitimacy, status, wealth and, ultimately, being allowed membership of mainstream society (Peterson 2003:209).

Lengoma's narrative expresses the dilemma of being in constant tension between contemporary society's focus on a luxury, materialistic and consumption-based lifestyle and not being able to live out these expectations in a South African society where the majority of people cannot afford it due to poverty and unemployment. Further, positioning it in a post-apartheid reality, it also illuminates the intra-racial inequality that has become increasingly visible in the South African context (Seekings and Nattrass 2001). The car owners are a very rich *black* couple, on the one hand expressing the idea that race is no longer a restriction for accomplishing wealth, on the other hand, emphasizing the enormous contrasts between the few rich and the lived realities of the black masses.

Lengoma's black South African idiosyncratic is achieved through communicating a sense of liveness distinctive from the artificialness often associated with European and American House music. This “liveness” is created through the video's depictions of live musicians and their use of what is apparently “unmediated” and “African”-sounding drums as well as

depictions of Zahara and the band singing and playing a “live” concert. The trumpet and flugelhorn players connect the text to a common black heritage traced through its evocation of African American music traditions rooted in jazz, further paying homage to previous generations of black musicians. Brass is not heard in the track, making the images paradoxical. Nevertheless the imageries work to mark the text off from western mainstream pop and other subcategories of House.

The use of shakers, woodblock and marimba and the images of men playing bongos further contribute to color the text with an African touch. Marimba and bongos are instruments historically developed and utilized by African slaves on the American continent. The world music scene has normalized the use of these drums as a way of expressing notions of the “exotic other” often connoting a specific black Africanness. The marimba riff constitutes the most characteristic motive of the entire remix creating the harmonic tapestry and mellow African timbre in which the song is built upon. It varies between two melodically downward moving patterns based on a-minor and d-minor chords.



Figure 2: *Lengoma*-Marimba motive

A rhythmic interplay between the marimba, bass drum, woodblock, shakers and syncopated drum beats create a polyrhythmic groove supporting the African sensibility of the hit. Traditional African music bases itself largely on layers of different, contrasting rhythmical figures brought together to a danceable groove.

African music has a well-known rhythmic priority, and the use of rhythm in African music reflects several characteristics. The basis of these characteristic is poly-rhythm. African music tend toward multiple rhythmic lines defined with reference to one another: frequently, the rhythms have different starting points and different timing (Chernoff 1991:109).

The rhythmical pattern repeated throughout the hit consists of a bass drum articulating every down beat, pumping the groove forward in an everlasting circular drive. Shakers play on every upbeat, helping to form the typical house-beat figure and contributing with coloring the timbre with sense of “liveness” as it gives the impression of not being mediated through technological synthesizers. Over this, a woodblock figure is heard, consisting of triplet fourths and syncopated impacts contrasting to the stable four-meter pattern of the house-beat.



Figure 3: *Lengoma*-Rhythms

Further, “spontaneous”, syncopated drum beats and figures create small moments of rupture in the music reinforcing the impression of live drumming and adding to the rhythmic complexes. This groove plays on a specific African-ness through its emphasis on African music’s focus on dance and rhythm.

The driving beat of house music reflects its primary function as dance music, providing a groove that serves as a rhythmic anchor for the dancers to lock onto. There are strong continuities here with several of the principles of African music [...]: the centrality of rhythm as an organizing principle, the groove generated from interlocking polyrhythms, the inter-connection between music and dance, and an essentially participatory nature of the musical experience (Sylvan 2002:119).

Surrounding this African timbre and polyrhythmic groove, dense “westernized” synth sounds, the house beat and especially the visual imageries connote the notion of a modernized, globalized and thus also westernized city. Moreover the images of cars, wealth, fashion and luxury embrace the consumerist and materialistic culture associated with western capitalism. Thus *Lengoma* displays African idioms as well as more global musical stylistics, mixing them into an expression appealing both to the South African public as well as a larger, global house culture. The music is at once negotiating both the local and the global through what Regev terms a cosmopolitan aesthetic. The musical language incorporates an aesthetic of localized, ethnical, religious and national uniqueness onto a global cultural genre and expression.

The production of ethno-national cultural uniqueness in late modernity, especially in the sphere of contemporary cultural forms, those based on modern technologies of expression such as ‘moving pictures’ and electric manipulation of sound, is in fact a practice of choosing, selecting and extracting elements from the plethora of expressive components available at a global level, including the producers’ own traditions. These elements are then mixed and hybridized into recipes and products that become signifiers of current cultural uniqueness of nations and ethnicities. (Regev 2007:125).

A South African Context

Arriving for the first time in South Africa in 2012, I was eager to see, experience and investigate what popular music dominated the public sphere. Were South Africans listening to the same music as we were in Norway? What was unique to South African popular music culture? I noticed quickly that, of course, South Africans were largely fed with the same popular music references as we were in Europe. Lady Gaga was holding a concert in Cape Town at the end of November, Gotye and Kimbra's hit "Somebody that I used to know" was getting massive radio air-time and Nicki Minaj was heard in every other taxi and club. However several aspects of the South African popular music scenery seemed to be unique and different from what I was used to in Norway. In between the recognizable mainstream hits, usually American, I heard varied musical expressions in different contexts. I heard Maskanda music, gospel music, jazz, house, hip-hop, trance and rock and I realized quickly that it became hard to talk about South African popular culture as one single culture. This is of course true for the popular music landscape elsewhere as well, however what was striking was the way different musical styles within the same country were so clearly linked to and divided into separate racial, ethnic and linguistic groupings.

Eighteen years after the end of Apartheid, the racial divisions and categories formed by the racist government, still play a very significant part in constituting South African identities. Although racial segregation is abolished and inter-racial inequality is in decline, cultural and collective identities seem to still be formed largely along racial lines. Musical taste is often based on and configured through racial and ethnic belonging.

Race remains relevant in South Africa for primarily cultural reasons. Most South Africans have clear racial identities (although they might not be their most important identities) and readily view others in racial terms (although not only in such terms). [...] South Africans may not be hostile to racialised others, but prefer to live and generally socialize with culturally similar neighbors, and for their kin to marry within racial (that is, cultural) groups rather than outside them (Seekings 2008:22) .

Dixon and Durrheim found that over 60% of the black population had no intimate contact with members of the white racial group. This means that a large proportion of the black population still live in isolation without inter-racial contact (Dixon and Durrheim 2010). In such a divided society where different cultures, both ethnically and economically, thrive alongside each other, separately, I chose to focus on the music popular among the black majority of the population, rather than investigating the racial and linguistic minorities, white British, white Africans, Indian

or Coloreds. Audiovisual expressions derived from a black South African reality constitute spaces where images of black South African bodies are put to sonic futures and shaped, emotionally conceived, remembered, reproduced and reconfigured in the minds of the South African public. It concerns the way the black majority is represented, understood and felt, not only among themselves, but by the minorities.

In search for an audiovisual text for investigating how identities were sonically and visually represented in the black, South African culture, I started by asking my pupils in the township of Khayelitsha, outside Cape Town, what music they listened to and who their favorite artists were. Immediately, the boys listed up names of famous South African House and Kwaito DJs. House music was clearly one of the most popular music genres among them. In a Survey from 2007 conducted in Cape Town preferred music genres were categorized according to race for the age group 16 to 24. The survey showed that house music was one of the few genres that seemed to be popular among all racial groups; 57 % Black, 31% Colored and 40 % white (Schenk 2009). However the broad term house includes subcategories as varied as Kwaito and Trance, which appeal to completely different racial groups. Kwaito music is undoubtedly most popular among black youth, appealing to 75% of the black respondents while only 4 % of white respondents (Loc. cit.). Basically Kwaito is largely influenced by European and American dance forms such as house and techno.

Many early kwaito numbers were produced by taking, for example, a track of British house, slowing down the beat and translating the lyrics into a vernacular South African language (Allen 2004:89).

Later South African House was again inspired by Kwaito-culture and became a specific under category of house. Through playing with African idioms such as African percussion, African indigenous languages and polyrhythmic samples, South African house evokes more of a *black* South African reality than European and American house-music. Kwaito and South African house are thus two closely related styles and their genre-boundaries can be hard to distinguish. The most significant difference is the use of vocals, whereas Kwaito often has a less melodious, rhythmically spoken, vocal style with resemblance to rap, South African House utilizes melodious, often female vocal samples, if vocals is used at all. Both modes of expression emanate from and appeals to youth who grew up in a post-apartheid reality, the so-called Y-generation (Impey 2001).

While the new establishment embarked on the project of living the dream they had struggled to achieve, an alternative narrative of the new South Africa arose from a different quarter: the black urban youth started to express their experience in a conglomeration of practices that has come to be known as Y culture, or *loxion kulcha*. Largely comprising black urban youth who patronize *kwaito* and Africanized hip hop, house, R & B and rap (Allen 2004:83).

After confirming House and Kwaito music's importance among my pupils, I asked them if there were any female artists they liked, as the Kwaito and House DJs they had been listed up were exclusively male. They all mentioned Zahara, the famous Christian Afro-pop singer. Thus in addition to the dance music of Kwaito and South African House, Christian pop and Gospel made up popular musical genres among my pupils. I was surprised that when asked to translate one of their favorite songs from Xhosa to English for homework, most of them turned up with songs they sung in church. The strong position of the church among the youth was striking. One of the boys confirmed that there were two options, either you go to church and sing or you become a member of a gang. South African public culture is experiencing an increasing Christian presence and its major support can be understood as a reaction to the hard conditions many South Africans find themselves in. A constant fear of sickness, poverty, unemployment, violence and death causes many to find security and meaning in religious faith. Furthermore, massive broadcastings of Pentecostalism and charismatic movements through media, gospel and pop music have been important as a way of marking Christianity as an up to date, global and modern belief, also appealing to the young generation (Meyer 2004:466). This Christian presence had to be taken into account when investigating *Lengoma*.

A Song of Religious Transcendence

In the westernized world, commercialized and mainstream popular music is often perceived as something profane and outside religious spheres. The idea that popular music can convey religious messages or religious feelings and emotions similar to that of Zahara is quite peripheral. However Christianity is prominent in South African popular culture and influence and permeates public images and expressions also in the 21st century. For most black South African people, the presence of religion and Pentecostalism is easily recognizable within their everyday lives and experiences.

According to the latest edition of the World Christian Encyclopedia (Barret 2001, see also Anderson 2001), in 2000 there were 83 million Independents and 126 million Pentecostal-charismatics in Africa. [...]. If Christianity appears to be on the wane in (Northern) Europe (and thus seemed to offer a prime case in favor of the secularization thesis), a new global brand of Pentecostalism thrives in Africa, Latin America and

Asia (Corten 1997, Droogers 2001, Freston 1998, Jenkins 2002, Lehman 2001, Martin 2002, Poewe 1994.) (Meyer 2004:451).

Whereas in Europe secularization has meant a decrease in religious presence in society, Africa has experienced the opposite, an increase in religious beliefs alongside modernization and globalization (Davie 2002).

In the West Christianity, while arguably a key source of modernity, has declined in its public significance as modern society has taken shape. In Africa it may be that Christianity is assuming an increasing significance in the creation of a modern, pluralistic African society (Gifford 1998:20)

This of course has to do with colonialism and the historical differences between the roles of Christianity in the two continents. During the colonial period European invaders tried to Christianize, modernize and civilize the African continent, consequently Christianity has been associated with modern society, progress, Europe and capitalism. Pentecostalism, as a growing global Christian movement, has been particularly associated with commercialism and capitalism and is perceived as a progressive and modern creed (see Robbins 2004).

Many PCCs present themselves as ultimate embodiments of modernity. Building huge churches to accommodate thousands of believers, making use of elaborate technology to organize mass-scale sermons and appearances on TV and radio, organizing spectacular crusades throughout the country-often parading foreign speakers-so as to convert nominal Christians, Muslims, and supporters of traditional religions, creating possibilities for high-quality Gospel Music, and instigating trend-setting modes of dress all create an image of successful mastery of the modern world (Meyer 2004:459).

Pentecostal movements' emphasis on ritual, experience and the Holy Spirit and its focus on the realities of the poor masses, rather than written doctrines, have also been important for its popularity in many parts of Africa (Meyer 2004:452, Robbins 2004). Although PCCs⁶ clearly rejects traditional witchcraft Meyer stresses that evil spirits in African traditional religion easily transforms to the Christian notion of the devil. Traditional witchcraft and possession of evil spirits can be derived away through Pentecostal practices, inducing of trance states, connecting the body with the Holy Spirit and ritualistic devil expulsions. Its focus on ritual, music and bodily sensation as well as its global outlook causes it to easily spread, take over from, oppose or work alongside African traditional religion. Pentecostalism can thus be seen as a religious embodiment of both a global capitalist culture and local particularity (Robbins 2004).

This Pentecostal attitude can be seen and heard throughout *Lengoma*. At several points the dancers and DJ Sbu put their hands together in prayer and look towards the sky. The first and second time DJ Sbu does this is at the point in the music, right before the chorus sets in, where

⁶ PCC short for Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches

there is a break in the groove. Zahara's voice is left alone for a second emphasizing the praying gesture before the release and “safety” is achieved again when the repetitive beat and chorus continues (Rose 1994:68-69). This gesture also appears during the males’ synchronized dance and is prepared with a crossing over the chest. It happens in the bridge-part of the song, where Zahara is simply repeating the words Nd'yathandaz (I pray) over and over again, hypnotically highlighting the trance-inducing beat and supporting the religious undertone of the song.



Figure 4: *Lengoma-Praying* gesture

This Pentecostal undertone affirms the music’s function in creating a means for experiencing states of transcendence. Bernard recognizes two main qualities that characterize transcendent music-making experiences.

Transcendent music making experiences are distinguished by two main qualities: (a) that the performer is functioning at the height of his or her abilities; and (b) that the performer has a sense of being a part of something larger than him or herself in some way (Bernard 2009:1).

These qualities are meant to describe transcendent experiences achieved when making music, not necessarily listening to music. As listeners and viewers of texts, we are nonetheless drawn into the performance. Zahara's emotional, straining voice and power, gives the listener a sense that she is part of something bigger, that she reaches beyond herself and performs at the top of her very abilities. She represents a transcendent, out of body, experience in which the listener can recognize and feel for him or herself. The music connects the body of the listener with a feeling of subliminal transcendence, a feeling of connecting to the Holy Spirit through the emotionally performed lyrics, the praying gestures and the trance inducing beat.

Nd'yathandaz'uyive lengoma (I pray that you hear this song.)
 Izovuselel'umphefumlo wakho (It will awaken your spirits)
 Ik'nik'ithemb'elitsha (and give you hope.)
 Kudal'usithi nyawo zam ndise (For a long time I have asked my feet to take me)
 Ndikhokhele undise kwantliziyo ndise (and lead me to a place)

Apho kungenjena umphefumlo wam wahlukene (where it's unlike this place that separates my spirits)⁷

The lyrical message underbuilds the melody. “Lengoma”, is sung in a very deep register with a rusty timbre, before the melody turns upward in pitch, increases in volume and is decorated with melismatic ornamentations as if straining or reaching higher in a hopeful and longing matter.

Thus the chorus constitutes a small climax as to lift the spirits of the dancing crowd to another level of joy and transcendence, encouraging the listeners to get lost in the music's underlying house-beat, to let the music take them to some place better.

Because of the high amplification and pounding insistence of house music beats, which are felt in the body as much as they are heard by the ears, the groove is often compelling to the point of trance induction for the dancers (Sylvan 2002:19).

This trance inducing beat, encouraging the listener to dance, and feel the music through their body reinforces the way the music creates a means in which the listener can be fully absorbed in the beat and through dance achieve some sort of “loss of consciousness”. Abraham Maslow mentions this as one of the meanings of transcendence.

Transcendence in the sense of loss of self-consciousness, of self-awareness, and of self-observing of the adolescent depersonalization type. It is the same kind of self-forgetfulness which comes from getting absorbed, fascinated, concentrated...this particular sense of transcendence of the ego or of the conscious self (Maslow 1971: 269).

This loss of self-consciousness through bodily sensation, dance and emotion can be seen as a parallel to Pentecostal trance-experiences of connecting the body to the Holy Spirit, feeling the sublime or divine.

Third, in the case of both flow and religious transcendence, an individual has the sensation as though she is outside herself. Her senses are overcome, and the field of her experience is completely filled with what is taking place at the moment. It is as though the person is cut off from the world around her (Bernard 2009:11).

Thus Zahara's presence as a Christian figure, her religious lyrics emphasizing hope and prayers, her emotional, transcending voice, along with the trance inducing beat creates an imaginary time and space where listeners can feel outside themselves, experience connection to something bigger, something other than the everyday realities of life. It makes available a condition that can carry listeners away, make them dance and sing and pray along to an overarching hopeful song that speaks to them from their own culture and reality. It is a song for the poor, black masses creating an expression that allows them to pray for, and feel a short sense of happiness, wealth,

⁷ Translated by Luzuko Teena 2012

and wholeness. Is this religious, subliminal space, a space that transgresses gendered inequality? Or does *Lengoma* first and foremost speak of and for a male culture and community?

Two South African Stars

In musical collaborations like this, power-relations between the artists involved are bound to take form. In the case of *Lengoma* we are not only talking about two different gendered subjects, a girl and a boy, a man and a woman, but the relation between an up and coming, young, 24-year old, female super-star and her older male manager, an already famous DJ and record company owner. Before getting into details surrounding how gendered identities are specifically presented in this music video, I will shortly discuss how the two artists are configured and presented to the South African public more generally.

There has been a public debate in South Africa surrounding the relationship between DJ Sbu and Zahara. DJ Sbu and Thembinkosi Nciza, co-owner of TS Record-company, were accused of taking too much control over Zahara's private finances and living conditions. Zahara's sisters claimed that she was being used as a housemaid and that the record-company was taking advantage of her and her parents' poor knowledge of the music industry.

They say, among other things, that she is not in control of her finances, still stays in Nciza's home, where she is allegedly treated like a servant, after being promised a house and she sometimes gets so desperate for money that she has to ask her 55-year-old mom for cash for airtime⁸.

Answering the allegations both DJ Sbu and Zahara met up in an interview together. Laughing about the situation Zahara states about her living situation that;

I mean come on...me being a maid? I mean I have been staying with them for like what, a year before I became Zahara, before I became this South African loved person. [...] I have money that I can afford to buy my own house, I can buy whatever car I want, but I will be taking my time. I am staying with them because I love them⁹.

DJ Sbu continues to defend the situation by postulating in a more serious tone that;

We need to send a positive message to artists and freelancers out there and I don't think it's a positive thing or it's a wise thing for any young person to start working and immediately are rushing to buying expensive luxury cars or whatever. I think it's a good thing that she is taking her time [...] ¹⁰.

After some jokes about Zahara not having her driver's license, DJ Sbu defends himself and TS record company, presenting them as Zahara's saviors, giving her and her family a major opportunity and a life outside poverty. Without discussing in detail who is right or wrong in this

⁸ News Article on Zahara and DJ Sbu, written by Mduduzi Dlamini in Sunday World, 15.04.2012, Accessed 08.03.2013:

<http://www.sundayworld.co.za/news/2012/04/15/zahara-s-their-maid---sisters-believe-nciza-is-ripping-her-off>

⁹ Interview with Zahara and Dj Sbu on Expresso, Accessed 08.03.2013: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKqrVA_3Vk0

¹⁰ Interview with Zahara and Dj Sbu on Expresso, Accessed 08.03.2013: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKqrVA_3Vk0

specific case, or what is true or not, the story clearly sets a contextual backdrop for the two artists' collaboration and plays a substantial part in positioning them in certain ways to the public eye. Frith points to the importance of the stars persona in marking the music's representations of subjectivity.

[...]the meaning of pop is the meaning of stars, performers with bodies and personalities; central to the pleasure of pop is pleasure in a voice, sound as body, sound as person.[...] The star voice (and indeed, the star body) thus acts as a mark of both subjectivity and objectivity, freedom and constraint, control and lack of control (Frith 1998:210).

Zahara is presented as the naïve, young (24 years is not really that young), poor, innocent and talented Xhosa-girl from the rural outskirts of East-London, easily victimized by greedy male producers and managers interested in cashing in on her. She grew up singing in a gospel choir and is a born-again Christian, belonging to one of the many PCCs in South Africa. In several interviews she states the importance of her faith as a central departure of inspiration for her music.

A born-again Christian, Zahara wants to touch people with her music. "All my songs reflect on what I believe in as a Christian and there is a "God" in almost every one of my songs. I really want my music to touch lives and inspire people," she said¹¹.

Her songs and videos play on her Christian moral through focusing on her cute, innocent and natural appearance and her wondering and religious lyrics. In her music-videos she is always properly dressed, not revealing too much skin, not sexualized in any way and typically she is depicted playing the acoustic guitar watching the sky in natural landscapes, writing lyrics under a tree, or walking on the beach by the ocean wondering about life. However authentic and "natural" this presentation might appear, it is also heavily influenced by a commercialized pop ideal that bears resemblance to the images in much Christian pop and Gospel music emanating from Pentecostal TV broadcastings. Her songs and videos are produced in a smoothly polished way, sweet and safely within the conventions of a singer-songwriter "afro-pop" tradition. Zahara performs a stereotypical female character, constructed within a patriarchal, Christian and male-dominated society. Whether this femininity is performed consciously or unconsciously, it is a "fixed" and constrained female image ready-made for her to embrace.

In important ways, the production techniques of girl groups songs mirror girls experience in a culture that confines them to safe, domestic spaces and hand them ready-made and obviously pre-fabricated experiences to make their own (Warwick 2004:193)

¹¹ Article on Zahara, Accessed 08.03.2013: <http://www.mio.co.za/article/zahara-sells-out-in-72-hours-2011-09-07>

She is not provocative or rebellious in any way; neither does she give the listener any major unexpected musical or visual surprises. Sometimes the images of her are exaggerated in such a manner that they become almost cliché; they boarder towards a constructed artificialness through an “over the top” sunny, harmless and pleasant depiction of her.



Figure 5: Zahara in music video *Loliwe*¹²



Figure 6: DJ Sbu in music video *Ndenzeni*

DJ Sbu on the other hand, is a major and influential House-DJ in the South African music industry and a popular Kwaito-artist. He is presented as a cool, trendsetting DJ who has been in the game for a while and knows what he is doing. He is one of many famous black male House and Kwaito DJs (DJ black coffee, Mandoza and DJ Cleo being others) belonging to the urban township Y-culture (Allen 2004). Langlois stresses that house-DJ's in the UK and European context seldom achieved star-status as celebrative personalities during the 90s.

Few DJ musicians, then, can be said to really have `star` status despite the high, even international demand for their performance or production services. The very names of the `groups` tend to have a generic and anonymous, even corporate quality to them [...]. The de-personalization implied by these labels may be evidence of a reaction (conscious or unconscious) against the record industry process of standardized image construction. Either way, it further shifts attention away from the composers of the music and focuses it instead upon the event-centered ethos of House, the performance relationship between DJs and dancers (Langlois 1992:234,235).

This is *not* the case within the South African 21st century context. Here house and Kwaito DJs are indeed “images” and/or idols recognizable by and highly present in the public culture. They are superstars and significant personalities in the music scenery, remembered by name and looks. DJ Sbu’s image can be associated with the masculinity displayed in hip-hop; the pimp or hustler figure with the cap and the cool, black “from the hood” attitude (See Gray 1995, Miller-Young 2007). However this image is reconfigured to fit a South African context, where a specific humorous, lively and dancing attitude is forged into the character. His cap, not all the way

¹² Picture from *Loliwe* music video, accessed 25.03.2013: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHuWNNsPWxo>

pulled down, but worn loosely on top of his head , the sunglasses, jewelry, and colorful t-shirts testifies an exaggerated 21st century “pimp”-style (differing somewhat from the 90s gangster style, with its emphasis on baggy pants and oversized hoods) commonly seen among black youth in urban townships. The style plays with the stereotypically American depictions of the black body. Seekings witnesses this trend when investigating racial identity among youth in South Africa. Rather than reproducing traditional, tribal and rural depictions of black South Africans, South African youth seemed to draw on global (read American) notions of “blackness”.

[...] school pupils did not simply reproduce an apartheid-style conception of race in terms of biology, history or past culture. Rather, they renegotiated race around the dynamics of taste (especially clothes, music and clubs). Black pupils define blackness not in terms of Zulu tradition [...] but in terms of global African-American culture (and icons such as Michael Jackson, Michael Jordan, Whitney Houston, and top rap-artists) (Seekings 2008:15).

DJ Sbu's black American style is used in a theatrical way, as a masquerade distinguishing him from white masculinity and old outdated more traditionalist, African masculinities. He represents a global youth culture of black coolness through utilizing urban South African township fashion.

It is clear that, through the media and their public images, the power-relations between Zahara and Dj Sbu are presented as both speculative and highly uneven.

Patriarchal discourses mobilize individual authority in a very narrow and limited way, and often attempt to deny female performers authenticity as creative subjects. [...] The male producer becomes the rational father figure to an infantilized undisciplined femininity. (Mayhew 2004: 153)

This is also true for this collaboration, where cool, modern, global and calm DJ Sbu is clearly in control of Zahara, the innocent, rural, natural song talent which he discovered and “saved”.

A Gendered Remix

Most significantly the *Lengoma-remix* is colored by the presence of Zahara as a loved female pop-star and icon. Zahara's voice and song is recognizable as a trope located in the South African public discourse; she is a figure, representing the “common”, Xhosa girl of the people, following a line of famous black, South African female singers such as Brenda Fassie and Miriam Makeba. Although Zahara's heavenly and strong voice captures large parts of the sonic space, and although Zahara is the author behind the melody and lyrics, she is robbed for parts of her agency as she is remixed and reconfigured by DJ Sbu in this text.

[...] artistic autonomy is most obviously recognized through the degree to which a performer is associated with the role of author. As the producer has become more and more associated with an authorial position

(both taking writing credits and also being associated with a brand of sound), a females performers positioning as a valued artist is tied up with her relationship to this role (Mayhew 2004:152)

DJ Sbu is presented as the most central artist, occupying the main position in the visual imageries as well as figuring as the main creative artist behind the musical aspects of the hit. He is in control of the composition of samples, drum-beats and technological production. Zahara is positioned only as the *second* artist, being one of the musical futures and South African images utilized, remixed and sampled by creative DJ Sbu.

A dichotomy is articulated here between the emotional expression of the artist and the technical objectivity of the producer.[...] Thus the producer is positioned as rational, lending technological expertise, instrumentality and structure to a feminine performance which lacks the ability to edit or transform emotional expression into a general communicative format(Mayhew 2004:157).

Throughout western history there has been a common association between the female voice and body and the realm of emotion. In house-music the female voice works as an expressive means to communicate varied emotions, whether this is anger, pity, pain, sadness or love and happiness (Bradby 1993:166-167). Several places Zahara's voice is simply a straining cry on vocals without lyrics. These instances constitute the most expressive parts of the song as her voice is emotionally charged in a way that captures the sorrow of the people without having to put it into words. It is an "authentic" immediate feeling or expression, sounding "unplanned" but sincere, emotional and compassionate. Although this "uncontrolled", passionate femininity represents a subjective and "weak" contrast to the "rational objectivity" of the male producer, it gives the female figure a medium of expression, a voice. Her voice can work as an empowering resource for the female artist to create an own place, expression and identity. Nevertheless, in *Lengoma*, Zahara is only pictured a few times in the video, often with her back against the camera, giving the impression that her voice is coming from outside of the video's narrative. Her emotional subjectivity is muted in the way her voice is, rather than coming from her own mouth and personhood, an overarching voice from above, highlighted by slight amounts of reverb. The use of reverb is however not exaggerated in any way, steering away from artificialness and keeping intact the presentation of Zahara as this authentic Christian girl.

Abantu k'dala bend'valel'indlela (People have been blocking my paths).
Besisthi andiyonto futhi ndiyaboniswa (Saying I am nothing, and it's evident.)

Kodw'I ingom'engaphakathi kwam ibalis'ibali Nokuwa (but the song inside me tells a story about falling down) nokuvuka komntu (and rising up) nolonwab'olungapheliyo (and never ending joy.)¹³

Her deep, warm and passionate song, suggests a femininity that is not sexualized in anyway, but rather otherworldly, divine, sensitive and motherly. The cameras do not focus on her beauty, or moreover her sexuality, but rather on her voice transmitting poetic and dignified statements.



Figure 7: *Lengoma*- Zahara singing

Sheila Whiteley states that women in pop-music usually are presented as stereotypical imaginary figures, imagined by men. She describes how the mother or the “earth-mother” was portrayed in popular music by men during the 1960’s.

The imagery is that of the imagined woman,[...], drawing on the symbolic associations of the lunar goddess who stands at both ends of the silver cord of life , presiding over fertility, birth and death[...] she represents equally sexuality and matriarchal energies and, as such , relates to the image of the earth mother (Whiteley 2000:34).

Zahara`s voice certainly fits this image; through her voices powerful resonance and the reverb used to enhance it, she is a mother Africa singing to all African nations uniting them in a common bond. Throughout the video DJ Sbu mimics along to the words of the song; her female voice is emerging from a man`s mouth. This could easily be interpreted as a means where DJ Sbu is taking completely control of, not only the technological remix of the music, but also Zahara`s voice. It could however also be read a symbolic guest which confirms the idea of Zahara inhabiting an overarching song, conceptualizing the “idea of the people”. DJ Sbu sings along to the all-embracing song of hope, thus the words appeal to everybody working to unite African or moreover South African people in a common song.

¹³ Translated by Luzuko Tenna 2012

Bradby highlights the way black female bodies in house music often has been linked to maternal qualities through the sampling of soulful, powerful voices and the displaying of “fertile”, natural and curvy, slightly older black women (Bradby 1993). These images was however quickly reconfigured and replaced by skinny, young, and model-looking females working as external pictures to the powerful, big voices that still originated from heavier black females. The white “teen” femininity often displayed in rock and pop music contrasted to the notion of bigger, curvier more maternal notions of the black female body.

Zahara’s image merges these two characters, utilizing aspects from both figures. On the one hand she exhibits this notion of an “African” natural body and voice. Her voice is deep and warm, her hair is black and curly and she is wearing a long, white dress with a ribbon around her waistline, highlighting her “African” curves. On the other hand she figures as a young and naïve Xhosa girl, clearly not fully embodying the confidence and power in which is associated with the idea of “a mother” or moreover “an earth mother”. Nonetheless, whether we chose to perceive of Zahara as an overarching, African earth-mother or a cute, teen, girl next door, her femininity is presented as a contrast to both the men and the other women in the text.

The men are given power by stereotypically enough being pictured handling the instruments; synths, turntables, brass, percussion, even the shakers.

Ironically, mastery of an instrument becomes a badge of musical truth, while bringing music out from within the body itself is dismissed as facile and `inauthentic` (Warwick 2004:193).

Moreover the men reproduce this power, through the presentation of the homosocial bond between them. In the video they hug each other, laugh, fool around, drink coffee, play music and hit on the pretty girls together, creating a sense of male community.

[...] in any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (*including* homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power: a relationship founded on an inherent and potentially active structural congruence (Sedgwick 1985:25).

Through emphasizing their common heterosexual desires towards women, they avoid falling into the slippage of appearing homosexual while at the same time keeping intact this emotional connectedness with the other males.

To create a masculine identity along the lines of dominant cultural discourses of masculinity, a man must not create love, dependency, nor sexual desire with his “fellow” men, but at the same time he must create solidarity with them. The men therefore find ratified indirect ways of taking up homosocial stances that are not homosexual stances (Kiesling 2005:720).

This homosociality is affirmed by the video's focus on three of the men, dancing a synchronized township dance-style, a mix between Mapantsula and Bhujwa. Although girls are seen dancing in the video too, they are merely moving their body slightly to the groove, whereas the men are performing this physical challenging, impressive synchronized dance form. This dance is a male domain and can be seen as a parallel to breakdancing.

According to many kwaito artists the mpantsula style has been a major influence on kwaito. The clothes, dance and even tough gangster attitude from the fifties [...] is evident in kwaito. Junior, of the group Boom Shaka, says: "The Mapantsula era was like the breakdance era whereby it was the only culture we could relate to, it was what everybody wanted to be. It was like the B-Boy of South Africa... it's the only culture we can relate to that's ours, that's local" (Rage, Issue 2). (Swartz 2003:4).



Figure 8: *Lengoma*-Dancing men

Thus in addition to ascribing the text to a masculine domain, this dance gives the text a specific South African distinctiveness. The image of the three black men dancing is a proud, transitive, dancing celebration of South African black culture and male identity.

This dancing and music-playing community of men leaves the women as outsiders in the video. The female images (not including Zahara) work mainly as beauty symbols in DJ Sbu's imaginary luxury life. They are ribbed for any form of significant agency and are placed in the video as objects, there so that the men can have fun and enjoy life together. The two women seen in the underlying picture are for instance appropriately enough sitting in the backseat, happy to be their drivers (DJ Sbu and an older companion) beautiful chosen ones.



Figure 9: *Lengoma-Car drive*

Referring to Rubin, Sedgwick claims that it is a common feature of homosociality to utilize women as «exchangeable, perhaps symbolic property for the primary purpose of cementing the bonds of men with men » (Sedgwick 1985:25-26). Interestingly they are, in comparison to Zahara, displayed through notions of western and white beauty ideals. They are slender, their hair is straightened, and they are wearing expensive, fashionable, sexy, classy but not provocative dresses. The woman most in focus in the video is also the only person depicted who is fairly light-skinned. The women are however, like Zahara, not explicitly sexualized in any way, affirming typical patriarchal gender-relations, family values and concepts of morality important for many South African Christian communities. Both Zahara and the other women represent the monogamous relation between the dominant men and subordinate women. In contrast to the men displayed in the video, they are only “seconds” in a black, *male* South African culture.

Considering the South African Pentecostal undertone of the hit though, these gendered relations become more complex. Robbins points to the paradoxical ways Pentecostalism both subordinate and empower women at the same time.

A consistent finding in studies of P/c churches worldwide is that more women than men are active members[...] But P/c's strong commitment to Pauline notions of patriarchy in which women are expected to subordinate themselves to men and participate in churches formally run by men has stimulated much research aimed at determining why P/c Christianity appeals to women(Robbins 2004:132).

Robbins argues that although men might possess formal institutional power in Pentecostal communities, women are often ascribed spiritual power, which often is highly valued. Further many Pentecostal churches arrange female prayer groups and services which create settings for women to talk publicly and influence on the Christian community. Moreover these settings allow them to develop public leadership skills that are valuable also outside the Pentecostal church. Another way in which women are empowered is the way many Pentecostal churches have huge

respect of the domestic sphere and household chores which traditionally are female domains. Zahara's song then, may work as a way of projecting an empowering Pentecostal femininity through its focus on female spirituality and the domestic, maternal role. Lengoma thus gives a voice to both a spiritually powerful female subjectivity through Zahara, as well as establishing and affirming men's formal, institutional power through Dj Sbu, the house-beats and the way the male community in the video is embodied.

4 Gorgoroth- Sign of an Open Eye

In Norway, at the opposite side of the globe from South Africa, a quite different musical expression has taken form. The second wave of Black Metal, often referred to as Norwegian Black Metal started in the early 1990's and is considered to be a more extreme variant of the first Black Metal wave during the 1980's (Granholt 2011:536). Musically it is characterized by high tempos, repetitive heavy blast beats, loud bass, dense, extremely distorted guitar sounds, screaming distorted vocals and an unpolished "primitive" production. It has however become most known for its leanings towards Satanist and anti-Christian ideologies and its shocking stage shows with crucified naked men and women, blood and animal heads. Band members often use black clothing, white and black make up, spikes and fake or real blood painted on their bodies. The genre has also raised great controversy in media due to violent acts committed by some of the band-members and fans. These crimes were considered connected to satanic ideology and included church burnings, violence, graveyard desecrations and ultimately murder (Mørk 2011).

In this case study I will first discuss Satanism and Norse heathen beliefs and how these religious leanings are connected to the Norwegian Black Metal scene. This is followed by an audiovisual analysis of Norwegian Black Metal band Gorgoroth's *Sign of an Open Eye* from the album *Ad Majorem Sathanas Gloriam* (Latin for: For the Greater Glory of Satan) released in 2006 by Regain Records. Like in Zahara and Dj Sbu's *Lengoma*, religion, place and a powerful masculinity seems to be vital shaping forces for the musical expression. Whereas in *Lengoma* a South African Pentecostal attitude secured the representation of traditional Christian, monogamous and patriarchal gender roles, this text, *Sign of an Open Eye*, secures male domination through its Satanic and Pagan undertones in a rebellious expression, evocative of stereotype ideas of Nordic Vikings.

Satanism, Nordic Mythology and Black Metal

Many academics downplay the satanic influences and ideology on metal music by arguing that the religious significance for many “metal heads” is absent and that “satanic” imagery is merely for promotional benefits. After conducting interviews with heavy metal fans Arnett concludes that:

[...] the “Satanism” of some heavy metal bands is not something only few metalheads believe in but something that performers themselves do not believe; they are only using it as a promotional device of sorts (Arnett 1996:126-127).

Walser (1993) also argues that heavy metal music is more “mystical” than Satanic and that metal lyrics, while seldom referring to Satan, sees Satan as a symbol of horror reflecting the brutality and reality of the world rather than a force of Satanic ideology (Walser 1993: 158, Arnett 1996:61-62). Both Walser and Arnett defend Heavy Metal from accusations of being Satanic and argue that Heavy Metal does not promote crime or violence, as if this defined Satanism.

Although Walser states that Satanism does not necessarily lead to violence he defends Heavy Metal from critics like Tipper Gore by stating that; «In fact, none of these critics are able to connect Heavy Metal directly with suicide, Satanism or crime » (Walser 1993:143). Here Walser mentions Satanism in line with crime and suicide, as if these three things were interconnected, equally illegal, unwanted and unmoral activities. However Satanism as opposed to suicide and crime is not illegal and there is not necessarily a correlation between Satanism and violence. Both Arnett and Walser argue that Heavy Metal does not inherit Satanism without actually reflecting upon what Satanism is. Although they are talking about Heavy Metal Music more generally and not Norwegian Black Metal in particular, they seem to fall short of defining Satanism and moreover taking satanic imageries and lyrics as a serious influence on metal music. Clearly a lot of metal music, also heavy metal, play with and are drawn to imageries and undertones evocative of “the dark side of society”, the devil, the flames of hell and anti-Christian attitudes for a reason. In order to investigate how Satanism is represented in Gorgoroth’s black metal music it is necessary to shortly clarify what it means.

Satanism is a vague term, often applied in different ways to describe a range of beliefs and practices. Taub and Nelson (1993) stress that Satanism is used differently by lay people, journalists and scholars. Scholars tends to focus on “the Satanic establishments” consisting of different forms of legal, structured and institutionalized groups of Satanic organizations, such as

The Church of Satan founded by LaVey in 1966 or *The Temple of Set* founded by Michael Aquino in 1975 (Taub and Nelson 1993:525). Journalists and lay people, on the other hand, refer to Satanism as what Nelson and Taub identifies as a “Satanic Underground”. This is a less structured and organized form of Satanism and is frequently accused of inducing criminal, violent behavior and anti-social characteristics among its adherents (Loc. cit.).

Clarifying the confusion surrounding Satanism, Taub and Nelson find it helpful to talk about two forms of beliefs, Atheistic and Theistic Satanism. Atheistic Satanism is prominent in many of LaVey oriented forms of Satanism and focuses on Satan as a symbol or metaphor for human qualities. They do not believe in Satan as a physical being, rather they believe that Satan is a sinful force in every human that should be acted out rather than oppressed (Taub, Nelson 1993:526). Theistic Satanic leanings believe in a physical manifestation of Satan as a certain being or manifestation of evil to be worshiped. These orientations have many different views on Satan. Taub and Nelson mention some;

Some follow a tradition of dualism (Cavendish 1967; Rhodes 1974), in which Satan represents the god of evil, equal in power and importance to the god of good. Other theistic Satanists maintain that Lucifer, an elder brother of Jesus and likewise a son of God, received unfair treatment at the hands of Yahweh, their father (Rhodes 1974) (Ibid:526).

Atheistic and Theistic Satanism are not clear cut categories and many inherit beliefs that cross over between these two views. LaVey’s nine statements from his *Satanic Bible* (1969) ¹⁴ sum up some of the prominent beliefs in the most influential and widely known satanic orientation.

1. Satan represents indulgence instead of abstinence!
2. Satan represents vital existence instead of spiritual pipe dreams!
3. Satan represents undefiled wisdom instead of hypocritical self-deceit!
4. Satan represents kindness to those who deserve it instead of love wasted on ingrates!
5. Satan represents vengeance instead of turning the other cheek!
6. Satan represents responsibility to the responsible instead of concern for psychic vampires!
7. Satan represents man as just another animal, sometimes better, more often worse than those that walk on all-fours, who, because of his “divine spiritual and intellectual development,” have become the most vicious animal of all!

¹⁴ Nine Statements, accessed 30.03.2012: <http://www.churchofSatan.com/Pages/NineStatements.html>

8. Satan represents all of the so-called sins, as they all lead to physical, mental, or emotional gratification!

9. Satan has been the best friend the Church has ever had, as He has kept it in business all these years!

Certainly many heavy metal bands are inspired by these anti-Christian, rebellious attitudes and notions of individualistic elitism.

While it may be true that most metalheads are not practicing Satanists, they are obviously drawn to satanic imagery for other reasons. I would argue that these reasons include heavy metal's individualistic philosophy, its rebellion against normative authority, and its connection with the supernatural (Sylvan 2002:178).

Because Satanism is thought of as only marginal or a cartoonish promotion for bands, it is not taken seriously as a religion, ideology and less so as an important influence on metal music.

Lucas et al. concludes after interviews with British Black Metal musicians and fans that

They did all agree with the view that black metal was more than just music, and that there was a distinctive depth to the genre's ideologies which went far beyond the cartoonish Satanism of 1980s metal bands like Venom (Lucas et. Al 2011:285).

Hence Lucas et. Al suggest a more nuanced approach to satanic ideology in black metal as they argue that some reject while others engage in Satanic inspired beliefs (Lucas et. Al 2011). These considerations demonstrate that Satanism, like any other religious orientation is not a fixed, solid entity; it is rather a shifting practice that engages different expressions, personal interpretations and beliefs. Thus Satanism and the use of satanic imagery are important when investigating metal music. Satanism is not defined by violent behavior. Neither does it mean that one has to be involved in mystic rites and satanic offerings. Satanism is, like any other religion, an orientation that in a postmodern framework can take on many forms that individuals engage in to varying degrees through their own personal belief and interpretations.

Several scholars have recently suggested that neo-pagan and heathen beliefs are more important than Satanism when describing black metal's religious undertones (Granholt 2011, Lucas et. Al 2011, Mørk 2011). Some of Gorgoroth's members attend to Nordic pagan beliefs. Former members of the band, Gaahl and Kvitrafn for example, now play in the band Wadruna that bases its music on Nordic runes and seeks to evoke Norse wisdom and spirituality through old historical instruments¹⁵. Kvitrafn states that:

¹⁵ Wadruna Accessed 10.4.2012: <http://www.wadruna.com/about/>

I have been a practicing Heathen for many years and I am also a member of the Norwegian Ásatru association called Bifrost. It was in many ways my religious or spiritual practice that made me start Wardruna¹⁶

However, in the case of Gorgoroth, these two beliefs; Satanism and Paganism are not contradictory. I suggest that these orientations reinforce each other and work together in forming their musical aesthetics. In fact, also LaVey (founder of the satanic church) proclaims to believe in and practice rituals inspired by Nordic Heathen belief.

We have also utilized Norse ritual, the casting of the runes, calling upon the Lotan and Thor and Loke, and all of the gods and demigods of the northern regions (LaVey 1970)

It is a common feature in neo-pagan religious beliefs to distance oneself to modernity and Christianity by seeking ancient religious and cultural roots. These roots, in Norway, present a longing towards the “golden age” of Scandinavia, the Viking age. Norse mythology is thus considered the natural and authentic way of belief, a perfect ideology to oppose modernity and Christianity.

Norse Heathen beliefs and practices are conceived of as the appropriate and natural-the authentic-way of life for people of Scandinavian or Northern European origin, as they were a products of the symbiotic relationship between the natural environment and the inhabitants of the land (Mørk 2011:134).

Norse Heathen religious practices like the worshiping of gods who represent chaos and dark forces and its emphasis on strong men and nature fit perfectly with the satanic views on human nature, desire and “sinful” lusts. Satanism provides a human view that is anti-Christian, individualistic and fits the image of the heathen Viking. Hence in a postmodern framework where pick-and mix religion opens up for new ways of being religious, black metal adherents are able to draw inspiration from both orientations, configuring new mixed forms of religiousness without necessarily keeping strictly to any certain one.

A Horrorfull Play with Imageries

Gorgoroth was one of the early Norwegian Black Metal bands. According to the bands web page it was founded in 1992 when Infernus, made a pact with the Devil¹⁷. The audiovisual text I analyze was posted on YouTube as a set of visual imageries consisting of still pictures put together to Gorgoroth's *Sign of an Open Eye* by a fan who calls him/herself Menegroth11. Menegroth11 states that the video is meant to be an entertaining fan video and that it is put together with pictures he found on Google Search. Because this picture collage is made by a fan

¹⁶ Interview with Wadrana in *Odræirir Heathen Journal*, Accessed: 10.4.2012: http://odroerirjournal.com/?page_id=186

¹⁷ Accessed 07.04.2012: www.gorgoroth.info/biography

it illustrates one way in which fans create visual connotations to the music. The text contains images that can be divided into two categories, band members performing or posing, often using inverted Christian symbolism (Figure 10-12) and majestic nature (Figure 13-15).



Figure 10: Gorgoroth Clothing

Figure 11: Spitting Flames

Figure 12: Crucifixions

The band members are always depicted with black clothing, corpse paint, serious or painful facial expressions and some pictures visualize them dripping in blood, spitting flames, carrying axes or holding swords or sticks with sheep heads. They present a warrior-like appearance; which evokes a strong, powerful and threatening masculinity. The picture of one of the band members spitting flames appears at the same time as the first phrase of the text is uttered; «There is a God in man». The flames, or forces of Satan, come from within the human reinforcing the thought of Satan as an evil force in man (Figure 11).

Many of the pictures play with inverted Christian symbolism, a prominent feature in LaVey Satanism (Figure 12). The *church* of Satan, the satanic *bible*, the Satanic *mass* and the nine *statements* all reverse Christian symbolism and practices. The cross is a commonly used symbol in Christianity representing Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection. When the cross is inverted in Black Metal, it symbolizes pain and suffering in the honor of Satan. The naked bodies hanging on the crosses provoke Christian notions of nakedness as sinful as it appeal to human lust and desire. Gorgoroth's images of sacrificed sheep heads, inverted crosses and crucified naked people are a mockery of Christianity. They use Christian symbolism to promote humans "evil" forces or Satan.

These visuals clearly evoke stereotypical images of death and fear drawn from western

horror movies and books. Walser points out that the popularity of horror films and books coincided with the increasing popularity of heavy metal in the 1970s and 1980s.

Both heavy metal and horror film address the insecurities of this tumultuous era. Both provide ways of producing meaning in an irrational society; both explore explanations for seemingly incomprehensible phenomena (Walser 1993:161).

These exaggerated images with the use of costumes, makeup and weird artifacts to appear scary, might easily be considered false, theatrical, or even comical, like an awkward circus performance. This theatrical dimension of their performance does however seem to have a serious undertone. In contrast to other rock bands using costumes and makeup, like Kiss for instance, Gorgoroth appear very convincing. Their extremity, both in terms of music, which I will get back to, visual performances and attitude is drawn further than just being considered a play. Through the slaughter of real animals on stage, the use of real crucified people, real blood, real flames, real nakedness and a constant seriousness, taciturn attitude they achieve a sincerity to their scary and horror full performance.

The other category of pictures presented is the portrayals of nature. These images are of Norwegian majestic, dark, mountains or misty woods during nighttime.



Figure 13: Man and Nature



Figure 14: Man and Nature



Figure 15: Mystical Mountains

Mørk stresses that portrayals of nature are common imagery in Black Metal and that it works to provide power and energy.

Within the black metal scene the perception of self is fundamentally and especially tied to the Norwegian climate and landscapes, and its majestic, harsh and willful character is taken as a model of authentic being (Mørk 2011:141).

These pictures can be read within a satanic context as LaVey Satanism sees nature and naturalness as the real forces of life rather than God, priests and the institutionalized church. However the images draw more on inspiration and sentiments from neo-pagan beliefs and Norse Mythology. They clearly seek to distance themselves from modernity by connoting a sense of

longing for the untouched natural forces of ancient times, an existence were human and nature were “authentic or true”; in a connected pact (Figure 13, 14 & 15).

Timbre of Transgression and Melodic Horror

Walser emphasizes timbre as one of the main characteristics that should be investigated in popular music texts, as this constitutes one of the clearest markers of genre.

Before any lyrics can be comprehended, before harmonic or rhythmic patterns are established, timbre instantly signals genre and affect. [...] The most important aural sign of heavy metal is the sound of an extremely distorted electric guitar. Anytime this sound is musically dominant, the song is arguably either metal or hard rock; any performance that lacks it cannot be included in the genre (Walser 1993:41).

Sign of an Open Eye is immediately marked by this dense, aggressive and murky sound placing it instantly within the metal genre. The unpolished sound is drawn towards the very extreme, placing it further within the Black Metal subgenre.

Black Metal’s empowering effects can be seen in its attempted departure from the constraints of the societal norm; in controversy, excess and extremity (Lucas et. Al 2011:293)

Gaahl, former member of Gorgoroth, responds «Satan» to a question on what primary ideology or ideas inspire their music. When further asked what Satan represents, he shortly answers; «Freedom»¹⁸. This idea of freedom is conveyed through the text's timbre, created through guitars and bass playing sustained, extremely distorted, loud and low frequented power chords. Power chords is according to Walser one of the most characteristic musical features underpinning heavy-metal music (Walser 1993).

The power chord can be percussive and rhythmic or indefinitely sustained; it is used both to articulate and to suspend time. It is a complex sound, made up of resultant tones and overtones, constantly renewed and energized by feedback. It is at once the musical basis of heavy metal and an apt metaphor for it, for musical articulation of power is the most important single factor in the experience of heavy metal.[...]. Its overdriven sound evokes excess and transgression but also stability, permanence and harmony (Walser 1993:2).

Open fifths and fourths are also prevalent in much Nordic folk music hence articulating both the text's metal character and heathen sensibilities.

The combination of distortion, sustained power chords and volume create resultant tones below the actual register of the guitars as well as it increases the energy of the higher harmonics (Walser 1993:43). Hence the low frequencies create a dark weighty sound while the higher frequencies create a roughness and edge to the sound. This technique generates a sensation of the sound occupying the entire mix, in all directions, with a filling and dense texture. Because there

¹⁸Gaahl in documentary film: *Metal: A Headbangers Journey* 2005, by Dunn, Sam and McFadyen, Scot

are no breaks or pauses between the sustained “wall of sound”, the expression becomes massive and forceful. Walser states that such effects are also created by pipe-organs to create a sensation of overwhelming, sublime power, representing the glory of God (Loc. cit.). Considering Gorgoroth’s religious leanings, this effect evokes the sublime and forceful powers of a darker contrasting evil, force; namely Satan or Satan within humans.

The power chords consist mainly of plain open fifths and fourths, however the most central chord in this text, (C#-G#), incorporates a ninth (D#). The chord is ultimately built up of two fifth on top of each other creating a massive double power chord effect.



Figure 16: *The Sign of an Open Eye*- Double power chord

The ninth further creates a disturbance; an “unsettled” dissonance to the harmony that reinforces the anxious and aggressive feel.

This sound of extremity fulfills Gaul’s notion of Satan representing freedom; it represents a space where freedom of norms, authority and Christian doctrines can be overcome. The timbre works as a timbre of rebellion and transgression, it is as far as one can get in connoting the opposite of Christian restraint and moderation. In a Norwegian context this anti-authority ideology becomes particularly anti-Christian as Norway has a state church and Christianity has been a major force in constructing and shaping the societies norms and values (Mørk 2011:125). Through their sound, Gorgoroth expresses an opposition to the way Christianity suppresses the freedom and desires of the individual, natural human being, while it also promotes Satanic perceptions of human superiority. The first and eight LaVey's Satanic statements promotes indulgence instead of abstinence and embraces sins as they give physical, mental and emotional gratification to human individuals;

This is a very selfish religion; we believe in greed and we believe in selfishness, we believe in all of the lustful thoughts that motivate men because this is man’s natural feeling. This is based on what man naturally would do (LaVey 1970)

Hence human’s sensory lusts and desires is encouraged through the loud, dissonant and massive timbre rather than oppressed through moderate musical frameworks and polished modified sounds.

Further, the text is characterized by a slow tempo at around 77 BPM (the beat marked at every dotted 4th) giving the music a weighty character. The track could be perceived as either having a steady 4/4 meter or a 12/8 meter (my reading will apply a 12/8 meter). A determined drive is created by guitar and open high-hat playing heavy pronounced triplets (in 4/4) or eights grouped in three (in 12/8).



Figure 17: *The Sign of an Open Eye*- Main triplet pattern

This triplet pattern along with the “armed” and “dangerous” men in the visual images connotes aggressive, marching warriors. Hawkins finds a similar rhythmic figure played in drums in his analysis of Wunderkammer's *Erlkonig*. He states that «the march figurations in *Erlkonig* are impossible to disassociate from the militarist innuendoes of a turbulent and bitter past in Norway, with strong connotations to the occupation period during World War 2» (Hawkins2002:72). Hawkins finds that this use of the marching pattern is closely tied to the Norwegian marching-band tradition, customary in the parades on Norway’s national day. Without necessarily evoking this same specific Norwegian patriotism, the images of Norwegian nature at least give this text a specifically Nordic suggestion. The triplet pattern certainly resembles militant, aggressive, marching and warrior-like undertones and can, like Hawkins emphasizes in his analysis, be tied to a historically European and white musical heritage. Mørk stresses that strength, honor, manliness and pride are important values within Black Metal.

[...] the worship of- or at least the acceptance of- strife, aggression, violence, chaos and war, to a certain degree inspired by the Norse male and warrior ideal and the code of honor and revenge of the Vikings, an adamant eye-for-an-eye and tooth-for-a-tooth ethics was applied (Mørk 2011:129)

This eye for an eye ethic and the emphasis on the strong, individualistic and Viking-like man is also prevalent in LaVey’s satanic ideology and comes to terms in the fifth satanic statement that constitutes a belief in vengeance instead of turning the other cheek.

The melodic material of the text is constructed around a C# Aeolian mode, evoking a bleak, minor, gothic sensibility; something Walser stresses also is typical in much heavy metal (Walser 1993:46). James Deaville suggest that a low register, minor keys and chromatic motion

make up some of the main musical features drawn upon when evoking horror. He states about Wojciech Kilar, who composed the music for a horror movie based on Bram Stoker's book about Dracula, that;

Kilar draws upon a variety of musical parameters to render terrifying the themes of Dracula and for his brides: these are angular themes that feature unusual melodic leaps [...], chromatic motion, irregular rhythms (juxtaposing excessively long and short values) and a minor key. Moreover, they often appear in and are supported by the lowest registers of the orchestra, which darkens the tone as well (Deaville 2010:198).

This Aeolian, minor tonality, the use of low register and chromatics can be heard in the main guitar pattern. It starts with a bend from the 5th a half step up to the low 6th for two beats before keeping the 5th. The guitars then drops down to the minor third keeping it in two beats before repeating the pattern again. The bend adds an emotive expression of strain; hitting approximate pitches on its way and causing a feeling of suction, first slightly up, than slightly down again while the tremolo effect of the upper guitar exaggeratedly connotes a shivering fear.

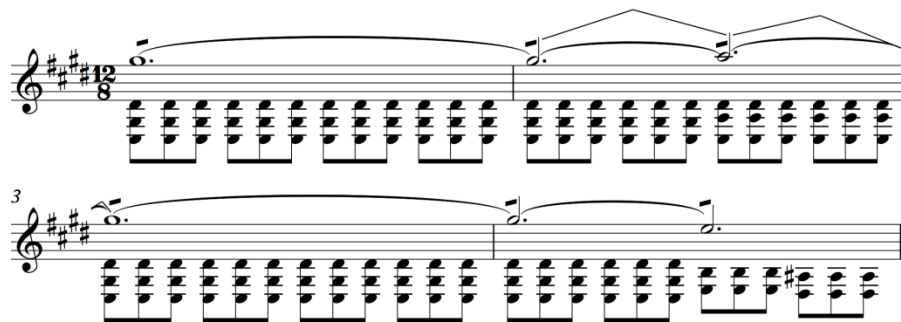


Figure 18: *The Sign of an Open Eye*- Chromatic bend and tremolo effect

After one minute and seventeen seconds into the song, Gaahl's vocals enter and the high-hat's triplet pattern is resolved to create a sonic space for the voice. The lyrics are spoken out rather than sung, uttered in a slow pace through a forceful, deep, monstrous vocal pronunciation;

There is a God in Man (break)

And in nature...(break)

He who sits in the dark (break)

Is the bringer of light (long break)

The sparse use of lyrics provides the few chosen words and phrases a sense of importance. The large lyrical brakes between each phrase, emphasizes the meaning of every line; it provides the time to reflect upon each short phrase before hearing the next. The deep vocal creates a sense of

the words coming from below in the mix, theatrically connoting a dark, mysterious, devil-like voice uttering magic messages to the audience.

The lyrics communicate a LaVey inspired Satanism. The first lines of the song state that «there is a God in man and nature».

The Satanic Bible (LaVey 1969, p 96) claims that “every man is a god if he chooses to recognize himself as one.” (Nelson and Taub 1993:526)

In this sense every individual is their own God and thus able to be powerful, strong and mighty as opposed to weak and governed by some overarching and doctrinal authority. The next two lines of the lyrics, “He who sits in the dark (break), Is the bringer of light (long break)” play with the evocative oppositional metaphors of light and dark and moreover good and bad. The lines distort the common conception of dark as bad, by indicating that he who sits in the dark actually brings light. By indulging in sins one is actually bringing hope to existence by acting according to what is seen as “natural” and selfish human behavior.

After this first verse a static moment of sustained guitar is introduced. Here the power chords are used as suspenders of time, highlighting the swishing effects on cymbals, shortly reminding us of the harsh powers of nature, before the triplet pattern enters once again. This time the drums create a sensation of half-time tempo by articulating only the first beat with the bass-drum and the third beat with the snare creating an extreme heavy and slow feeling.

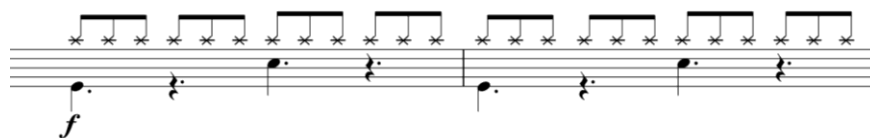


Figure 19: *The Sign of an Open Eye*- Half-tempo feel

At this point a soft vocal is heard in the background creating a mystical atmosphere. The vocal timbre has changed from distorted speaking to soft mystical background singing.

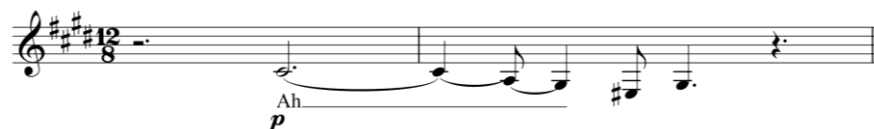


Figure 20: *The Sign of an Open Eye*- Background vocals

The melody adds an exotic, archaic touch to the sound as it goes through an e-sharp, the major third, rather than the minor third. Although many of the chords presented in this song are without

thirds, the overall tonality has a minor feel as the melodic lines and chords are based on the Aeolian mode in which the minor third step is significant. The melody is placed in the very background of the mix and adds only a sensation of something exotic and mystical before the second verse starts off;

This Beauty (break)

The Sign of an Open Eye (break)

Walser stresses that much heavy metal lyrics are concerned with the dark side of modern capitalist society; war, greed, patriarchy, surveillance and control. He shows how the eye as a symbol is used in the lyrics of “Electric Eye” by Judas Priest.

Now the eye openly taunts those below; it is intoxicated with pride in its metallic perfection and inescapable gaze. [...]Driven by frenetic but precisely controlled music, the song evokes the paranoia of state surveillance and control, at the same time that the narrator’s position as the electric eye offers the seductive experience of omniscience and near omnipotence, the pride of metallic, technological perfection (Walser 1993:163).

In Gorgoroth’s song the narrator or the “eye” symbolizes Satan or moreover Satan in man. Satan in man is given power and full control through this sign of an open eye. The eye evokes fear and panic which is directed towards the audience or listener. It further illustrates something mysterious and unknown; it is an eye that, in many new age and occult traditions, sees the mysterious, secret, supernatural or spiritual realm. It is considered a symbol of evil, mystic and fear.

Belief in the evil eye is extremely ancient and widespread. [...]It brings bad luck, impotence, sterility, miscarriage, sickness, and death in various combinations (Greer 2003:163).

After this phrase, which also constitutes the title of the song, the music reduces its volume and starts the buildup period consisting of falling semitones. The Baroque doctrine of affect used downward chromatics as a musical symbol for grief, pain, fear and hell already during the 16th century.

Drum Set

Electric Guitar

Voice

Roar

Raor

4

Dr.

E. Gtr.

Voice

Whispering

Roar

Whispering

Whispering

8

Dr.

E. Gtr.

Voice

Figure 21: *The Sign of an Open Eye*- Chromatic build-up

This falling motion symbolically signifies a pull towards hell, to Satan’s domain. For each bar there is a sensation of moving one step further downwards towards the dark and low sphere. This happens right before the peak of the text is reached; it is like the downward motion accompanied by mystical whispering calls leads the music towards release, where Satan and freedom fully comes into power. The drums hammer out a forceful series of triplets before loud distorted “monstrous” vocal screams marks the climax. The last bar before the peak changes to a 6/8 meter, emphasizing the last crescendo into the finale.

8

Dr.

Gtr.

CLIMAX

10

Dr.

Gtr.

Voice

Distorted Voice: Roooooooooaaar

f

Figure 22: *The Sign of an Open Eye- Peak-moment*

Here all tension is resolved while pent-up emotions are converted into raw aggression through outbursts of vocal screams, louder guitar playing and a new fiery rhythmic drive. The forceful rhythm is no longer triplets but rather 16th notes hammered out in the bass drum.

Drum Set

Sounds like

Figure 23: *The Sign of an Open Eye- 16th pattern in bass drum*

The underlying 16th figure in the bass drum works like rolling thunder underneath the distorted vocal screams. Because the first beat is articulated in the cymbals and snare the overall rhythm sounds like an 8th followed by four 16s. This gives the music an enormous drive forward, reinforcing the connotation of warriors galloping into final battle. This is also emphasized through the vocals, screaming out the remaining lyrics with a louder, higher, more distorted, and from the guts timbre;

Call him, to black flame

Call him, bringer of light

The message is clear. It is to «call him» (Satan) into the black flames. In Christianity flames are used in to depict the way sinners are burned in hell (Satan's domain); it symbolizes evil, satanic destruction and power. The black flames in the lyrics thus work as a symbol for hell or the dark power of Satan.

Flames and fire have throughout history been symbols of suffering and destruction, but also of purification and power. A church collapsing under the power of flames may have worked as a powerful metaphor of Christianity's breakdown in society (Mørk 2011:133)

It is as if the lyrics encourage people to summon the forces of Satan into power and destruction. Yet, less clear is what is meant by Satan. Gorgoroth plays with the double meanings the lyrics inherit, as Satan could be understood symbolic or not. For some it might mean calling for Satan in a physical sense, as for others it is understood as to bring forward the Satan within oneself. Considering the first two lines in the song though, (which emphasizes humans as God), Gorgoroth is advocating a LaVey notion of the term, calling for Satan to emerge in humans. The last part of the text expresses the ultimate battle, the ultimate freedom, the ultimate call for Satan and the ultimate call for masculine power, transgression and greatness.

Call him, to black flame

Call him, Call him, Call him.....

Masculinity and Whiteness

The representations of white, strong and aggressive male figures permeate their expression through the forceful, loud and aggressive sound and the images of white men in Nordic sceneries.

People who identify with the culture and people of the Norse era and forge this into their own life story, even acting on the basis of such a relationship, see themselves as becoming some kind of a Viking, or even a figure from Norse mythology such as an *ås* or *åsynje* (god or goddess), jotun (giant), depending on how strong the identification is (Mørk 2011:136).

The swords, fires and axes reinforce the stereotypical representations of the Viking. The monstrous growl of the vocals with the masculine deep pitch connotes a very testosterone filled, violent masculinity. Lucas et. al problematizes this particularly white identity among black metal fans and musicians in their article on Black Metal in Northern England:

Traditionally, the North of England, like Norway, was white – and the recourse to an imagined sense of whiteness is a reaction to the perceived changing demographics of both geographical locations. The concepts of ancestry and heritage presented by the respondents contain racialised discursive orderings, with biological constructions of race tied in closely with cultural distinctions (Lucas et.al 2011:291).

Lucas et.al emphasizes how members of the black metal scene found whiteness as a feature they could identify with. The importance of belonging to a community with shared cultural origins becomes more urgent in western contemporary, multicultural, globalized and deindustrialized world. This longing for an ethnic identity can function as a way of distancing themselves from the alienating contemporary mainstream society.

The “roots revivalism” within English black metal leads to an empowered sense of pride among an audience of people who may commonly claim to feel marginalised. Imagery of warriors forging and fighting for the land enhances the empowering effect of the music, inspiring contemporary battles for this perceived lost heritage (Lucas et. Al 2011:292).

Both Satanic and Norse-pagan orientations view Christianity as a major cause of man not being in the right, natural element. Mørk argues that many black metal bands consider Christianity as a destroyer of natural manhood as it has suppressed nature and man’s natural dark drives, urges, and desires (Mørk 2011:139). Hence the black metal's leanings towards darkness, evil forces and lusts are meant to oppose Christianity’s impact on man and thus return it to the “authentic” order of things.

As stigmatization, tabooing and discrediting of man’s-or rather, the male subject’s-‘dark’ sides is regarded as having made him into a divided being, a stranger to himself, the black metal worship of ‘darkness’ is intended to make man whole again, restore man’s kinship with nature; in other words, to return him to his natural state of being (Mørk 2011:140).

Combining satanic philosophy with the Norse Pagan image of the Viking-warrior represents a masculinity that provides little room for females, femininity and moreover alternative masculinities. In fact, representations of women are nearly completely left out. The only representation of a female in this text is a naked woman hanging on a cross in one of the pictures. She hangs helpless, weak and crucified in the background of the powerful men playing the loud and forceful music. The woman is presented as a worthless offering. This representation is also a part of a stage show; presumably the image is meant to shock and create fear rather than merely presenting women as weak. There are for example also naked males hanging on crosses, thus the fact that it is a female might be less significant. However this is the only image of a woman and it does portray her as powerless, vulnerable and naked. While Gorgoroth leaves out the

representation of women some heavy metal bands present the female as a femme fatal. In both cases the female is a disruption to the male community.

Women are presented as essentially mysterious and dangerous; they harm simply by being, for their attractiveness threatens to disrupt both male self-control and the collective strength of male bonding (Walser1993:118).

Thus homosociality secures the patriarchic notion of masculine power also in this case, like in the previous one. In fact, this time the desire for male-bonding seems to be constructed around the notion of breaking of taboos together rather than confirming heterosexual desire. Kiesling states in reference to the fraternity clubs he investigated that « [...] the collective breaking of taboos build homosocial intimacy among the men» (Kiesling 2005:710). Gorgoroth's extremity, obsession with death and the use of blood and dead animals and their provocative view on human beings selfishness constitute taboo- areas that the men break together, linking them to a common cause and persisting on their masculine power. Kiesling argues that male-solidarity and heterosexual desire are two contradictive aspects of homosociality that needs to be acquired through a balancing act in order maintain masculine dominance. Mørk states that homosexuality in the black metal scene is very often frowned upon (Mørk 2011:137). However in the case of Gorgoroth, because of the underlying satanic ideology; the heterosexual aspect is less significant. Satanic ideologies open up for humans to never suppress their desires and embrace their fetishes. Accordingly homosexuality is not perceived as ideologically bad. Actually on the contrary, since Christianity historically has condemned homosexuality, Satanism approves of it.

We feel a person should be free to indulge in all of the so called fetishes, all of the so called admirations that they would so desire as long as they do not hurt anyone that doesn't deserve or wish to be hurt (LaVey1970).

Sedgwick argues that one way homosociality affirms patriarchal concepts of male dominance and power is in fact through ideological homosexuality.

For historical reasons, this special relationship may take the form of ideological homophobia, ideological homosexuality, or some highly conflicted but intensively structured combinations of the two (Sedgwick 1985:25).

Gaahl, the most controversial and famous former member of Gorgoroth is openly gay. Gaahl does not represent homosexuality in a stereotypical manner, by emphasizing his solidarity with the heteronormal feminine realm and their sexual draw towards men, rather he presents a very

extreme masculine version of homosexuality. On questions of his sexual identity and his “coming out” as a homosexual he answers indifferently:

For me it’s a non-issue of course and I have never seen it as a coming out basically. It’s just that the media makes a case out of it [...] it’s just that one journalist dared to ask me, and I just answered him (Gaahl 2008)¹⁹.

Representations of sexuality in this text are therefore quite complex. On the one hand the text presents a masculinity that embraces all the historical stereotypes of manliness. On the other hand it presents a “man only” world without room for women. The desire for women and the themes of love and romance, common in many other popular music genres, are completely absent.

Kiesling also points to the way competition for power and status through alliances were important in homosocial networks. This, I believe, is very important, in this text, as being the most extreme, breaking the most taboos ascribes status within the environment. Hence being acquaintance with someone or as extreme as someone, like Gaahl for instance, can achieve higher subcultural status. Through their breaking of taboos, their dominant masculinity is in a way secured without the need for women to prove it. In fact because homosexuality is seen as a taboo in this environment, and if you will an “abnormal” expression of satanic indulgence in selfish lust, it is brave, accepted and consistent with masculine power, status and satanic ideology.

Nevertheless although Gaahl is openly homosexual, this does not mean that this is common in Black Metal or that the Black Metal scene is an environment homosexuals can identify with more than other genres. Rather the intimidating, strong, testosterone filled and aggressive representation of males and the non-representation of women make the genre quite elitist through its narrow gendered representations. The genre does of course have female and homosexual fans and musicians, but the environment, in general, is dominated by white, elitist males in a very extreme sort of homosocial environment. Additionally these narrow representations are claimed as authentic or natural “in man” through Norse-Pagan and Satanic sentiments.

¹⁹ Video interview with Gaahl from Gorgoroth and Wadruna 2008 , Accessed 22.04.2013: http://www.faceculture.tv/index.php?cnti_key=11783218

5 Nas- The NYC Don

Leaving Norway, one of the least populated countries in Europe, the next two cases emanate from New York City, one of the most populated urban cities in the world. The city represents a major global metropolis constituted by a mix of millions of different people. The two cases originating from NYC²⁰ present two quite different expressions; one emanates from a black man while the other from a white woman, one in the genre of rap, the other within mainstream pop, one plays with Islamic sensibilities, the other with catholic narratives. However, like the two previous cases, religious undertones seem to play an important part in the aesthetic expression of both. I will first take a closer look at Nas.

Rapper, Nasir Bin Olu Dara Jones, more commonly known as Nas, has been famous since the release of his legendary debut album, *Illmatic* in 1994. This album was followed by several multi-platinum selling records and secured Nas to become one of the long lasting and most famous rappers in the United States rap industry. Nas was brought up in the projects of Queens Bridge, NYC. This NYC identity is marked in several ways throughout the music video to his hit “The Don” from his latest album, *Life Is Good* released July 17th 2012. While southern U.S. rappers usually are connection to the black church, gospel and Baptist movements, many NYC rappers are more concerned with religious leanings associated with Islam. Both *The Nation of Islam* and *the Five Percent Nation* had their start, resurgence and major base in NYC and it is rappers connected to NYC who most profoundly have been concerned with lyrical topics related to Islam. Nas is no exception, and Islam’s presence in his music conveys a particular Afrocentric, NYC, black masculinity. Also here, like in the two previous cases examined, there seems to be a strong correlation between a homosocial bond and the insistence on male power and female subordination.

The Five Percent Nation

The narrative to the music video *The Don* revolves around Nas’s persona and his luxury life as a rich and powerful mafia boss. The video is permeated with images of the NYC skyline and Nas’s indulgence in pretty women, cigars, Champagne, food, fancy cars and clothes occasionally interrupted by flashbacks from his previous harsh life in the hood. Religion colors the text with a specific black and Muslim character. Nas confirms in an interview that Islam and especially the

²⁰ NYC: New York City

Five Percent Nation (also known as Nation of Gods and Earths) have inspired him and affected his music.

I was surrounded by Christians ... my grandmothers, all my family was from the South, Baptist. As I got older I got into the 5 Percent Nation, and then that pushed me toward Islam. [...] ²¹

These spiritual leanings are reflected in *The Don* in an indirect manner. Other rappers are known to mark their beliefs more explicitly. Yassin Bay (formerly known as Mos Def) for example, dedicates his music to Islam by incorporating prayers and blessings to Allah in the beginning of every performance. Spirituality in rap and hip-hop music are usually performed more subtly through musical associations and religious references in the lyrics to mark the artist's identity and religious beliefs. Khabeer (2007) makes a distinction between Islamic rap, which focuses on communicating a religious message targeted towards a mainly Muslim audience and Muslim rappers who find themselves in the mainstream hip hop landscape but happen to be Muslim. The latter group negotiates their beliefs through the music without making it the main focus. This is certainly the case with Nas as he targets a wide mainstream audience, but at the same time utilizes religious associations as part of an overall expression.

The Five Percent Nation is an Islam-inspired group with most of its followers being black Americans. It considers NYC as a place in which Middle Eastern, Islamic Sacred places have been relocated.

In Five Percenter theology, Manhattan (particularly Harlem) is known as Mecca, Brooklyn is Medina, Queens is the Desert, the Bronx is Pelan, and New Jersey is the New Jerusalem (Aidi 2004:111).

Its teachings have a strong nostalgia towards a previous, pre-white, Islamic, ancient African kingdom where "Black Men" were the righteous rulers of the world. They are inspired by the Quran, but differ from any "traditional" conception of Islam by incorporating Black Nationalism and esoteric symbolism to letters and numbers. For instance, they refer to Black men as Gods or Allah.

The science of Supreme Mathematics is typically used in conjunction with an alphabetic system known as the Supreme alphabet, in which every letter of the alphabet is assigned a mystical meaning, [...]. In other words, in "breaking down" the word "Allah" to mean "Arm Leg Leg Arm Head" Allah is given human form, described by making a transit of the body. Describing Allah in human form is consistent with the Five Percenter belief that each black man is divine (Miyakawa 2005: 29).

This belief contrasts strongly with traditional Islam's belief of Allah as an overarching force, a one and only God. This contrast signifies the vital importance of African-heritage and black

²¹ Nas Interview Accessed 06.05. 2012: <http://forums.projectcovo.com/showthread.php?t=533717>

men's important position for the Five Percent Nation.

Afrocentrism and Islamic though are used by Nas and other black Hip-Hoppers to differ themselves from and oppose a Christianized, white and westernized US society. Many alienated and marginalized Black and Latino Americans from poverty struck urban areas identify with and find belonging in Islamic movements; it gives them guidance in life as well as a sense of pride in their race and ethnicity.

Christian America has failed them, and stripped them of their "ethnic honor." [...] Sunni Islam, the heterodox Nation of Islam and quasi-Muslim movements such as the Five Percenters and Nuwaubians allow for a cultural and spiritual escape from American social order that often entails a wholesale rejection of western culture and civilization. By embracing Islam, previously invisible, inaudible and disaffected individuals gain a sense of identity and belonging to what they perceive as an organized, militant and glorious civilization that the West takes very seriously (Aidi 2004: 109).

In *The Don* these religious leanings are mixed with images of life in the hood, American materialism and the narrative of the mafia-boss in a collage of different sonic and visual images. Together they constitute a hip-hop expression, located in the NYC metropolis, negotiating aspects from both the Islamic Middle East and westernized American mainstream culture.

Prayers over NYC

The music video *The Don* starts out with a sound effect imitating the sound of waves while portraying the Staten Island ferry heading towards Manhattan, or according to Five Percent theology, Mecca, the city where all Muslims turn to in Prayer. With this as the background setting, the record label, Def Jam, the artist, Nas and the title of the song, "The Don" is presented. The image of the statue of Liberty is placed between the words "Nas" and "The Don" leaving no doubt that this music-video presents a New York artist.



Figure 24: *The Don*- Statue of Liberty

The first vocal sample heard features reggae-star Super Cat repeating the words "New York Girl, dem a mad over we" from his 1982 hit *Dance inna New York*. Super Cat's Jamaican accent adds

an exotic nuance that emphasizes black New York's ties to the Caribbean Islands and pays homage to the Reggae-tradition. Sarah Daynes stresses the way reggae-music and the idea of Africa is tightly connected.

Because reggae music is considered African, in an essentialist view, it is also viewed as a 'cultural recipient' that not only intrinsically holds culture as a whole, but transmits it spontaneously[...]. In a way Reggae is Africa, as many other practices are; as such, it is considered to be powerful in terms of cultural transmission and awareness (Daynes 2004: 28).

Thus the sampled reggae artist is symbolically transmitting "the idea of Africa" into the text, coloring the text with an African-ness that underlies Nas's and the Five Percent Nation's Afrocentric, Black Nationalism.

After this intro a "ring" is heard and a beat is established, marking the actual beginning of the hit. Like most rap-music the track has a stable 4/4 meter, but the sound differs from the slow, heavy, melodic and riff based style of West Coast rap and the live, instrumental, r&b sound heard among southern rappers. Nas rather, uses a specific way of layering samples that Krims calls "The Hip-Hop Sublime".

The hip-hop sublime is a product of dense combinations of musical layers. All of them reinforce the four-beat meter, but in the domain of pitch they comprise a sharply dissonant combination, even by the standards of jazz, or soul, harmony. In fact layers tend not to even be "in tune," so to speak: they are separated by intervals that can only be measured in terms of fractions of well-tempered semitones. [...] Another (inseparable) aspect of the hip-hop sublime is timbral: the layers tend to be marked by clashing timbral qualities, often associated with varying sound sources [...] (Krims 2000:73).

Nas creates a dense and "noisy" timbral texture through his use of complex, often chaotic and many layered samples on top of each other. Most of the time, the track varies rapidly between two different vocal samples with two related beats. These two sections underlie Nas's Rap and work as the main musical pattern throughout the text. Each section lasts for two bars (or 8 beats) before the other one takes over. Tricia Rose emphasizes how rap music is often based on rhythmic repetition and rupture.

Rap music techniques, particularly the use of sampling technology, involve the repetition and reconfiguration of rhythmic elements in ways that illustrate a heightened attention to rhythmic patterns and movements to such patterns via breaks and points of musical rupture (Rose 1994:67).

These moments of ruptures cause the repetitive beat to become even more pleasurable through interrupting it slightly before establishing it again (Loc. cit.). This happens throughout this text with the different loops that take over from one another every two bars. From now on I will characterize these sections as loop A and B.

Loop A consists of a vocal sample that repeats the phrase "Nas-The Don" (from the

Super-Cat song), while “urban” sound-effects (sirens, lasers, synth noises), bass and snare articulate every single down-beat.

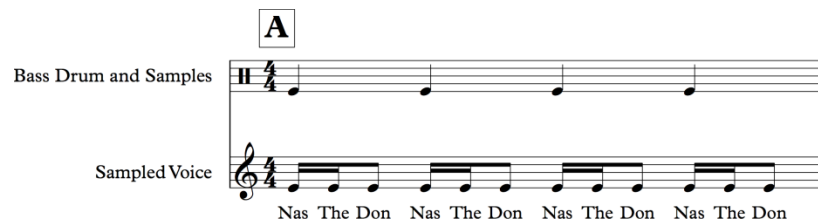


Figure 25: *The Don- Loop A*

This loop never gets the heavy feel, characteristic of loop B because it avoids any contrast between the deep bass sounds and the lighter, crispier snare. Rather, it pushes the music forward with the same emphasis on every beat achieving a forceful, dense, fast and “noisy” character.

Loop B presents another Super-Cat sample pronouncing “New York City” with a rhythmic pattern consisting of a quaver in bass drum on the first beat, then a dotted 8th and 16th in the snare and then another quaver in bass before the snare again enters with a dotted 8th and 16th. Extreme echo effects on the vocal sample create two “extra” 16th on the end of every other beat, producing the specific rhythm marked in the underlying example.



Figure 26: *The Don- Loop B*

This section lets the bass articulate only the first and third beat, opening up the texture between the beats, emphasizing the rap lyrics, Nas’s vocal timbre and the crispy snare. Thus this loop has a groovier, heavier and more danceable and spacious feel to it.

Rather than sung, both vocal samples are recited and repeated in a monotone manner with approximately the same pitch on all the notes, evocative not only of Jamaican reggae but of Islamic prayer recitation. Rose notes how samples in rap-music often are used to create new intertextual meanings and understandings in different contexts (Rose 1994). In this case the sample’s monotonous, recitative voice recalls the call to prayer heard from minarets and mosques in many middle-eastern, African and now also many western countries and cities. The

echo effects of the samples and the images of NYC in the background insure us that it is a voice that is heard over the entire city. Rather than praying to Allah as an overarching God it stays true to Five Percent theology, calling out and worshipping Nas, as a human manifestation of Allah and NYC, the American version of a black, Islamic sacred land. The belief that the black-Asian man is God also fits the presentation of Nas as a powerful, god-like mafia boss. Hence this sonic “imitating” of Middle Eastern prayer-recitation connects the whole text to Nas’s religious and ethnic identity, expressing his ties to the five-percent nation and his sympathetic leanings towards the predominantly Muslim Middle East.

After loop A and B has been played once, the first rap-verse starts. Visually the images have gone from portraying the New York skyline to Nas sitting on a fancy rooftop surrounded by beautiful girls, smoking cigarettes, eating and drinking while wearing a tailor-made suit, sunglasses, expensive watches and jewelry.



Figure 27: Nas's golden ring

His jewelry, especially his ring and his big golden circular pendant is zoomed in on a number of times emphasizing his wealth and Muslim belonging. Rather than a cross, his jewelry is a circle, symbolizing the perfect geometrical form in much Islamic art. It is a circle that according to both the Supreme Mathematics and The Supreme Alphabet represents a cipher that connotes fulfillment or completeness;

It is a whole.360 degrees of *KNOWLEDGE (120) WISDOM (120) & UNDERSTANDING (120)*. All in existence pertains to a cipher²².

Or as Miyakawa puts it:

[...] its meanings also emphasize the wisdom to be gained when Gods “build” together, or converse, in a cipher, a circle of fellowship (Miyakawa 2005:55).

It also represents the Sun which is the “light” of knowledge; the foundation of the solar system, or a symbol of the original Man, the foundation of Allah.

²² Supreme Mathematics, Accessed 22.04.2013: <http://www.blackapologetics.com/mathdetail.html>

[...] the sun and the moon represent man and woman; when they are combined they produce the star, a child. The completion of both cycles shows the perfection of creation. As the circle of man, woman and child is complete, so is Allah complete (Miyakawa 2005:62).

His luxury jewelry is also a typical hip-hop accessory which together with his extravagant lifestyle underlies the meaning of the lyrics, emphasizing how he has worked his way from the criminal gangster life in the hood to becoming rich and successful.

Smoking the escubano, guzzle my second bottle, (A)
Hope I don't catch a homo, grossing our net. (A)
Simultaneously making me climb higher (B)
Heinous crimes behind me, search but can't find me (B)
Fuck Sadness! Had this been you having this lavish (A)
Habitual happiness at me you wouldn't look backwards (A).

(The letters refer to the loop section heard in the background)

Nas's rap-style can be characterized as "speech effusive", a technique commonly associated with a typical New York rap idiom. «Insofar as New York MCs are effusive in any way, it is the speech-effusive style that characterizes that city» (Krimms 2000:77). The speech-effusive style, like spoken language, has an unclear, irregular underlying metric pulse and complex and unpredictable polyrhythms and rhymes (Ibid: 51). The style focuses on the forceful, spitting delivering of the lyrics, the "harsh" timbre of the voice and the rhythmical complexes that occur between the rap and the underlying accompaniment. This contrasts to the sing-songy, more melodic and "happy" flow of old-school rappers, which are marked by frequent end-rhymes, regular rhythmic patterns, "predictable" couplet-groupings and heavily pronounced on-beat accents (Krimms 2000:49-50).

The effusive speech style heard in *The Don* can be interpreted as an aesthetic reflection of the multifaceted, unpredictable, chaotic and urban noises of the city. NYC constitutes a clash of different people, voices, cars, subways and building sounds; it is "the city that never sleeps". The speech effusive rap along with the hip-hop sublime mirrors this environment. Rather than predictable and clear cut rhymes, the style is confused, irregular and harsh, also capturing the poverty, violence, gang-life and hardship of growing up in the city's projects through its spitting, direct and hard resonance (Krimms 2000: 70-73). As Islam and hip hop have both been perceived as a threat to traditional Christian values in contemporary American society, Nas's harsh style represents a voice that expresses anger and frustration with the authorities as well as it voices the realities of living as a Muslim, black man in contemporary America (Alim 2006).

Tensions between Two Worlds; Paradise and Earth

During the next part of the first verse a bass-line is added to the music. It is one of the few samples that, although being basically a rhythmic pattern gives the text a melodious hook to rely on.



Figure 28: *The Don- Bass-line*

This bass-line appears in combination with the samples used in loop B, but here the drumbeat is omitted. The omission of the drumbeat makes room for the voice to come to the front of the sonic mix. It is here that Nas raps the most “explicit” lyrics so far, mentioning sex, weapons and violent threats. Through this variation the section builds up a new tension in the song;

You would have sex on condominium roof decks (b*)
So anyone move next, I'll hit you with two Tecs (b*)
Rocking Roberto Cavalli no shirt on convertible Mazy (A)
My Colombiana mommy riding beside me (A)
Every tat mean something, that's my word on my body (B*)
I'll have to lean something wit that Mossberg shotty (B*)
My niggas is ignant, put lead in yo pigment (A)
Just cuz y'all was mad at all the years I was getting it (A)
In 97 the six, 98 the Bentley (B)
Now it's the Ghost Phantom and y'all can't stand 'em but (B)

(B*: section B with bass-figure b*: section B with bass figure, without drum-beat)

This verse refers to Nas's supremacy, domination and violent propensity and to his never-ending climb towards even more power and wealth. By naming his increasingly expensive, stylish and fancy car ownerships he illustrates how he has worked his way upwards. Thematically the lyrics place the hit somewhere in between Mack /pimp rap and realist gangster rap. The emphasis on money, wealth and sex fits the pimp-style while Nas's portrayals of the hard, criminal life in the hood point towards gangster-rap. Krims mentions Don-rap as another style that has emerged. This style fits Nas's case more precisely and concentrates on the character of the mafia boss or the don-figure. Often, the rapper takes on this position to show off his power and dominance both in the sphere of money and ladies and through pointing to his criminal past in “the hood”. Thematically it marks itself from other styles with its highly imaginative and exaggerated

narratives. Its kitch tendencies gives this style a sense of irony, not prominent in either pimp or gangster rap, while still keeping intact its authenticity.

It is the fantasy-framing of don rap, with its anti-verisimilitude and often-playful jumble of popular-culture references that separate it both from mack rap and from the earlier gangsta rap (Krimms 2000: 83-84).

Visually the video alters between portraying Nas riding around in his expensive, fancy car and his “memories” from days in the hood.



Figure 29: Nas in white suit, reading Business Day in limousine



Figure 30: Nas in ring of fire

In the flashbacks, he stands in a ring of fire with a Palestine scarf around his neck along with other “brothers” in the hood. He is of the people; poor, angry, and rebellious, speaking up against American Israel-friendly politics and values. By wearing the Palestine scarf he shows sympathy with the Palestinian cause, sending a special sympathetic gest to the Muslim world in the aftermath of the Arabic springs of 2011. Aidi (2004) mentions several Muslim hip-hop artists connected to the Five Percent nation that have promoted pro-Palestinian causes and uses rap as a means of expressing opposition to U.S. policies and as a way of distancing themselves from whiteness and the west.

The culture of hip-hop and the language of Islam are used to express anger at government indifference and US foreign policy, to claim a cultural-political space, and to challenge structures of domination (Aidi 2004: 113-114)

This anger and the notion of a global Muslim community that is militant and organized in its opposition against a morally decaying and greedy westernized society, is emphasized in the next part of the lyrics which refers to his army jacket. Nas claims authenticity through his real army jacket and his marihuana smoking, giving him not only respect in the hood, but painting the text with a militant undertone. He further expresses that he is not afraid of being caught, by stating that he hides his drugs in his socks.

Army jacket swag, Army jacket green and black (A)
with the square top pocket that snaps, where the gas at? (A)
Pass that, not you, you hold cracks in your asscrack (B)
I never did that, my sock's where my stash was at (B)

Smoking weed is used to escape the harsh realities of life in the rough environment of the inner city gangs. The idea of escape is also prevalent in Nas's imaginative dreaming of being a mafia boss. These images, although resembling the truth of Nas's success, represents hope for his fellow blacks in the projects by providing them with a fantasy dream. This "dream" is symbolized through money and materialistic pleasures.

These exaggerated portrayals of materialistic wealth can also be interpreted as an ironic critique of western and American materialism, consumerism and superficial lifestyle. It is a dreaming trope that plays with the contrast between poor and rich in US society. On the one hand it pictures the realities of the poor, violent life in the hood and on the other hand, for many, the more unrealistic, heavenly portrayals of luxury life. Drawing a parallel of religion into this, the contrast also resembles the binary nexus between heaven and earth. On the one hand portraying hard everyday life on earth, and on the other, heavenly life in paradise, overflowing with wealth, women and food. Thus the injustice felt by many poor black, Muslim "brothers" in this life will be just in heaven or paradise. It presents hope for the "lost cases" which, if they believe, will experience paradise after death.

The Poet, the King, the Don, the God

During the next section of this verse the rhythm of loop B changes. The snare and bass drum is replaced by soft but articulated rim shots, changing the timbre to a more hard-wood, drum-sound.

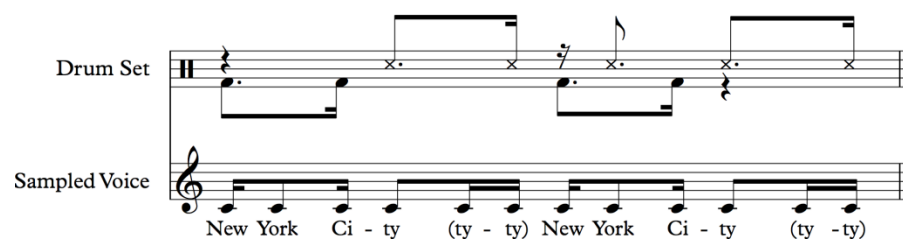


Figure 31: *The Don*- Dry drum sounds

Rather than the westernized, artificial, electronic mainstream bass-drum/snare sound it produces an "African" touch. The sound clearly does not resemble African drums, but it has a "primitive", dry and "homemade" quality to it, giving the text an exciting variation and a "from the hood" sensibility.

Yo, I used to listen to that Red Alert and Rap Attack (A)
I fell in love with all that poetry I mastered that (A (woaaa))
Cutting school with Preme team, the Fat Cat was at (B)
Future not crystal clear yet Baccarat (B)

These lines fit the “from the hood” sensibility by making a nostalgic reference to “back in the days” when Nas listened to DJ Red Alert and the first major rap radio show, Rap Attack. In the next lines Nas uses wordplay on Crystal to refer to how his future was unclear: he cut school and hung out with violent and criminal gangs in the hood, but he had his rapping skills or poetry which was so good that his future was still secured, or Baccarat (a brand of Crystal).

Instead of the word rap, Nas uses the word poetry as it indicates higher prestige and connects rap to high art, rather than merely “primitive”, “untalented” rapping. In this way Nas undermines the negative reputation rap has had as a musical expression, especially among the upper-class, “sophisticated”, white milieu. Using the word poetry to refer to rap is common among rappers and it is also used to link rap to a long history of black oral traditions and poetry (Rose 1994). It is also highly evocative of Nas’s religious sensibilities, connecting him to the historic tradition of Islamic poets, and to the Five Percent Nation’s emphasis on “the supreme alphabet” and the words of wisdom.

The “divine sciences” of Supreme Mathematics and Alphabet are sets of principals and an evolving system of analysis, attached to numerals as well as the letters of the alphabet, which serves as keys to divine knowledge. [...]The Supreme Alphabet of the Five Percenters has been instrumental in making members extremely adept at the “breaking down” of words, in order to arrive at their true, esoteric meaning, in accordance with the lessons provided by Master Fard and Father Allah (Floyd-Thomas 2003:56-57).

Thus words and numbers and their underlying “divine” symbolism are highly valued within the Five Percent ideology. Poetry then, being a play with words, symbolisms and rhymes can be seen as a very prestigious art form.

Diverse Muslim members of the HHN (Hip Hop Nation) have independently observed that the very means by which the *Qur’an* was revealed to the Prophet—that is, orally and, in large part, through rhymed prose—exhibits parallels to the linguistic and literary mode of delivery found in Hip Hop lyrical production. The Black American oral tradition has rarely been interpreted in this way, yet Muslim artists have creatively conceptualized links between their mode of production and their Islamic faith (Alim 2006: 49-50).

The lines that follow introduce the first complete cuts in the beat, highlighting the lyrics and enforcing the rapturous feel. The “cuts” or “breaks” emphasize the repetitive nature of the music and makes the listener value the repetitive force of the beat. It teases a stop, and then

returns to a dancing beat. Rose argues, with reference to James A. Snead that these complex ways of using repetition and rupture contain cultural and social implications rooted in Afro-American history and reality. Repetition, through its continuity can be understood as a sense of security, “insurance against sudden ruptures and as a way of hiding and masking undesired or unpleasant facts or conditions” (Rose 1994:68-69). The breaks then, resemble uncertainty, dangers and anxieties reflecting the life in the hood, while the release in the beat’s repetitive force gives a security and transitive insurance that “life goes on”. Lyrically the cuts also work to highlight certain lines as identity markers that grasp the essence of the entire text.

Now I'm the one who rapping Queens, way beyond your wildest dreams(A)
Bottles on bottles with sparklers surround my team (A)
That long cash get the baddest bitches out they jeans (B)
20 years in this game, looking 17 (B)
I don't lean: no codeine, promethazine (A)
I just blow green, pick which bitch to bless the king (A break)
Although he's on to another chapter (B)
Heavy D gave this beat to salaam for me to rap to, braah (B break)

“Pick which bitch to bless the king” are the first words that appear in a break and are extremely sexist charged, as they assign Nas with complete sexual power and dominance over female bodies. He gives himself the prestigious title, King while bluntly referring to women as bitches, only there to fulfill his sexual pleasures. He apparently has the power to “pick” and “chose” between harems of women that willingly submit to giving him sexual pleasures. The title King also evokes Five-Percent Nation imagery as they perceive all black men as Kings, Gods or Suns, and black women as Queens, Earths or Moons. However Nas degrades women to bitches.

Although Bitch is a commonly used word for women within rap and hip-hop vocabulary and many critiques have argued that these words are not necessarily sexist, they still have major implications, especially when put in contrast to a powerful male-figure like a King.

Five-Percent Nation ideology perceives the two genders and their power as quite unequal. A black man can be conceived of as a God while a woman is seen as a Muslim, submitting to the God or Man. According to the supreme mathematics, the number 7 is thought of as a divine number, and represents God or black men, while women, at their best, can only reach a 6, never being completely divine. These attitudes are also displayed towards white people, considered to be “evil” toxicities made by the devil (Miyakawa 2005). It is clear that the Black male, the King or God has a high and privileged status within Five- Percent Nation theology, and thus also in

many NYC hip-hop environments.

Further the masculine dominance and power is reinforced, also in this case, through the homosociality projected in the video. Nas is never alone, but always within a community of “brothers” or men, largely achieving his status from the other men's acceptance. In the video he is the center of attention among the men, both in the hood, and in the rich environments. This network of men, like in the case of DJ Sbu, drink together, laugh together, hang out together and confirm their heterosexual desires together through hitting on lightly dressed women together. They are clearly very connected with one another, but not in a sexual way, which is assured through the female sex-objects made available to their desire.

Because heterosexuality is such a strong discourse, the men must present their emotional intimacy as clearly nonsexual, since sexual and emotional intimacy are often bound up with each other (Kiesling 2005:711)

Clearly homosociality is a vital force in expressions derived from patriarchal societies and work to maintain masculine dominance.

However, because of Nas's fantasy-like framing of the whole narrative, his access to women and the way women are presented might be ironically charged. It is a critique of the American commercialized society and the image of the typical American dream.



Figure 32 : Nas's Luxury-life

Nevertheless it might also be a wanted fantasy, a fantasy that is wished to be fulfilled, it is like Nas is asking himself why shouldn't black men experience the same success, power, wealth and lavish as white rich politicians, business men etc.?

Moreover although these images are exaggerated, and some of them an ironic presentation of American society, the danger is that they reproduce the images of black women as sexual objects, there merely for black men's “uncontrollable” sexual drive.

The badman uses the female body as an object for his sexual prowess, as a geography on which to graft the territory of his badness. The construction of the badman is related to the historical white male authority's hypersexualization of the African American man as an excuse for abusing him and as a means of attempting to destroy an alternative human masculinity in society (Perry 2004 :129).

“Heavy D gave this beat to salaam for me to Rap to” is the next line that is left alone during a break. Nas states that Heavy D is on to another chapter, implying that he is dead, and now moving on to heaven or paradise. Nas folds his hands into prayer and looks towards the sky, giving his praise to God and Heavy D (also a black man, a manifestation of a God), whom hopefully hears his prayers from above. It is a common way of name-dropping the producers involved in the making of songs and reflects the strong connection between the producers of the beat and the rapper. It also creates a sense of status for both Nas and Heavy D in the way it, again, expresses this homosocial connection between men or in this case, Kings or Gods. After this verse a ring similar to the one heard in the beginning marks another transition of loops before a bridge section sets in marking the turning point in the video.

The Bridge-A Rikers Island

The Bridge marks the biggest inconsistency in the otherwise repetitive and cyclic looping. Here a new sample is heard with a harmony that evokes a jazzy or “soul”-ish chord progression. It is played with heavy sustain and echo-effects on synthesizer, creating a chaotic, “out of tune” feel. It presents downward motions, giving the text a kind of, sickening, insane sensation of the music falling apart. During the second part of the bridge there is no underlying beat, adding to the feeling of insecurity and instability. Visually this part portrays a group of black males moving their hands in an up and down motion. This section is a free-floating, static moment in the text where only Nas’s rap, the background harmonies and the synchronal hand-movements of the black males paste the text together and keeps the progress of the song intact.

New York is like an Island, a big Rikers Island
The cops be out wilding, all I hear is sirens
It's all about surviving, South Same old two step
Try to stay alive when they be out robbing

The lyrics reflect on the hard realities of living in the hood, Nas describes it like living in a Rikers Island (New York’s main jail) filled with sirens and crime. After the turning point in the hit, loop A sets in again and the last part of the rap is uttered.

I been out rhyming since born knowledge (A)
Like prophet Muhammad said, the ink from a scholar (A)
Worth more than the blood of a martyr (B*)
So I'mma, keep it on 'til I see a billion dollars (B*)
Keep your friends close and your enemies closer (A)
Love model chocha mommy pop it like she 'pose ta (A)

Eyes red shot like I'm never sober (B*)
Big time smoker, Indonesian doja (B*)
Mini me's you can hold up before you end up wet up from my soldiers (A)
Don shit, under fire I remain on some calm shit (A)
This for every ghetto in the hood (B)
Nas the Don, Super Cat the Don Dada, understood?! (B)

During this verse, Nas has found his way from the rich life with Champagne, food and women on “condominium roof decks” back to the realities of where he came from. He has arrived back at his poetry, religion and his brothers from the hood. The first three lines are the most explicit reference to The Five Percent Nation in the entire lyrics. The first line uses a word play on Born Knowledge, meaning that Nas has been rapping since the very beginning, but also giving a direct reference to the supreme mathematics. Born translates to number 9 and Knowledge to number 1, meaning that Nas has rhymed since 1991. According to a Five Percent Nation web-site

Knowledge also means:

[...]accumulation of facts through observing, learning, and respecting. Knowledge is the **foundation** of all in existence, for it must be "known" in order to make it manifest. Born means the completion of all in existence. To manifest from Knowledge to Born, which is the law of mathematics, means to be complete in itself²³

The next two lines refer to prophet Muhammad and a hadith saying that ink from scholar is worth more than blood from a martyr, signifying that knowledge, wisdom and words in God's name are more righteous than shedding blood in God's name, again emphasizing the importance of poetry, words, wisdom and verbal Jihad. The last two lines is an exclamation, making it completely clear that it is Nas, and the man behind the voice of his samples, Super Cat also known as the Don Dotta (the major Don) that are the makers of the song, the bosses, two black men, kings, suns or even Gods in control of NYC. After this, the song fades out through loop A and B while visually the letter N (for Nas) is shown in flames.

The narrative of the video evolves from the beginning to the end. It starts by portraying Nas mainly within rich and luxurious environments. During the video, more and more flashbacks of his background in the hood are showed and after much back and forth between these two worlds the bridge marks a turning point leading Nas to end up with his brothers in the hood in a ring of fire. This transition marks Nas's true identity or self; his real commitment lays with his poor, black brothers, and not in the materialistic, commercialized US culture. Through this text The Five Percent Nation ideology and its link to NYC, Hip-hop culture and afro-centrism all

²³ Supreme Mathematics, Accessed 22.04.2013: <http://www.blackapologetics.com/mathdetail.html>

work together in an inter-textual relationship conveying Nas's powerful masculinity. His speech effusive rap style and the hip hop sublime connotes the hardship of poor black Americans and the lyrics and samples evoke his Muslim leanings that contrasts to his portrayals of American society. Thus the video illustrates the constant tensions involved in 21st century realities of being alienated, marginalized and poverty-struck in a society where achieving materialistic wealth is expected and valued. Nas resists and differentiates himself as well as engages in and identifies with an American reality. He presents the localities of NYC as well as an "imaginary global" through his representations and connection with the African, Middle Eastern and Western parts of the world.

6 Lady Gaga-Born This Way

Lady Gaga (Stefani Joanne Angelina Germanotta) is one of today's biggest and most dominant pop artists, appearing rapidly with new hits on the world's top chart lists. Gaga is known for her extreme and extravagant live shows, music videos and costumes. The main theme in her latest album *Born This Way* from 2011 involves the celebration of otherness. The album includes a range of singles that incorporate religious imagery and symbolism. In an interview on Larry King, Gaga accounts for her ambiguous feelings towards the church and religion:

I struggle with my feelings about the church in particular, but I guess, quite honestly [...] religion and church are to completely separate things. But in terms of religion, I'm very religious, I was raised catholic, I believe in Jesus, I believe in God, I'm very spiritual, I pray very much, but at the same time there is no one religion that doesn't hate or speak against or be prejudice against another racial group or religious group, or sexual group and for that I think religion is also bogus. I suppose you could say I'm a quite religious woman that is very confused about religion and I dream of and envision a future where we have a more peaceful religion or a more peaceful world, a more peaceful state of mind for the younger generation and that's what I dream for (Lady Gaga 2010) ²⁴

The religious undertone of her album is apparent in many of the track's titles, such as: *Judas*, *Bloody Mary* and *Electric Chapel*, moreover in many of the hit's music videos and lyrics. The second track of the album, *Born This Way* was released in February 2011. The single has been compared to Madonna's *Express yourself* as it incorporates a style inspired by late 80's/90's dance music and expresses a theme of love and tolerance. *Born this way* is especially aimed at the gay pride movement and has several references to gay rights. However, the song also goes

²⁴ Lady Gaga Interview on Larry King 01.06.2010, Accessed 08.05.2012: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCW3v5gbxrY&feature=related>).

out to anyone who is different or has been or is oppressed, like women, ethnic minorities and other queer identities. The music video won two awards at the MTV Music Video Awards and the single became number one on charts in thirty countries. The text is basically divided in two; a cinematic prologue and a more choreographed dance sequence.

The Cosmic Birth

Through the manifesto of “Mother Monster” the narrator, (Lady Gaga), tells a story about an eternal, cosmic birth of a new race within humanity while “kaleidoscopic” images illustrates this magnificent moment. The accompanying music, an excerpt of Bernard Herrman’s prelude written originally for the psychological thriller *Vertigo*, creates the background tapestry of sound and “otherworldly” atmosphere underlying the narrator’s voice. Before the Manifesto is heard, strings and clarinets play a static, melodic pattern of triplets moving in contrasting descending and ascending motions, creating a tension and excitement for what is next to come.



Figure 33: *Born This Way* - Cm9b5 and Ebm-maj7 triplets in prologue

One of the melodic lines is made up of two broken chords; moving first upwards and then downwards; a Cm7b5 and an Ebm-maj7. The contrasting pattern; a d-augmented triad and an Ebm-maj7, starts in a descending motion before moving upwards. Put together, the patterns make up two chords first a Cm9b5, then an Ebm-maj7. The characteristic, “unstable”, sound of the maj7 and the diminished fifth creates a dreaming, mystical and otherworldly atmosphere. The minor add 9-sound, and the diminished seventh also ascribes the text with an underlying tension and a feel of melodrama and anguish (Tagg 2004).

The fact that half-diminished chords often fulfill such a function confirms their status as signifiers of drama and pathos in highly familiar types of popular music (Tagg 2004:12).

This sense of drama is highlighted by the tremolo effect in violins, giving the text a restless, shivering character.

Visually the prologue starts by picturing a pink upside down triangle with a unicorn inside. As opposed to an upright triangle, which symbolizes the phallic, this upside-down

triangle signifies femininity and fertility. It also inherits historical associations to the gay community. An upside-down pink triangle was used by Nazis to categorize male homosexual prisoners under the Second World War (Haeberle 1981:283). At the end of the video an upright triangle with a pink haired zombie-Gaga blowing bubblegum inside is shown. This triangle has become a commonly used symbol for the gay pride movement. Hence the transition from the downward to the upright triangle symbolically illustrates a transition of power for subordinate groups within a patriarchal and heteronormative society, like women, queer identities and homosexuals. Their supremacy has changed throughout the song; from being oppressed to being in power. This depiction of the triangle, at the beginning and end of the text, sets the framework for the entire video by illustrating the main message of the song, celebration of otherness.



Figure 34: Pink upside down triangle

Figure 35: Pink upright triangle

The unicorn inside the triangle inherits its own sets of meanings; besides being a common symbol within the gay-community, it signifies something ambiguous, mystical, magic, unknown and fantasy-like. It is a symbol of strength, purity and goodness, but also wilderness, the untamable and erotic; certainly connoting the feminine realm. As a biblical, catholic symbol, the unicorn has often been used as a symbol of Christ's relationship to Virgin Mary or connected to Virgin Mary more generally, signifying strength, kindness, virginity and motherhood (Walker 1982). The unicorn thus inherits multiple meanings; it ascribes the feminine and gay community with strength and goodness, but also represents them as untamable wild creatures.

After approximately 5 seconds into the video the unicorn is replaced with an odd, alien looking Lady Gaga with her legs placed up against each side of the triangle. She has symbolically taken over the role as Virgin Mary. This shift is accompanied by the lower brass section entering with a dramatic declaration; a loud and unison phrase moving, melodically in

descending seconds. The second entry is even more dramatic as it moves further down in register. The lower octave causes the brass to seem grander and utterly more powerful.



Figure 36: *Born This Way*- brass entrance in prologue

The phrase signals the transition from the “pure” and “passive” Virgin Mary to Lady Gaga’s more untamable, alien version of the figure.

The pink triangle is then duplicated and several triangles move towards the viewer creating a hypnotic, trancelike effect. Suddenly Lady Gaga is depicted with two faces, a huge hairstyle, closed eyes and spread legs, sitting in a glasslike throne rotating in the middle of a black, star filled, outer space. The violins are here replaced by soft harp and celesta creating a magical timbre that distances the text from any ordinary and mundane world.

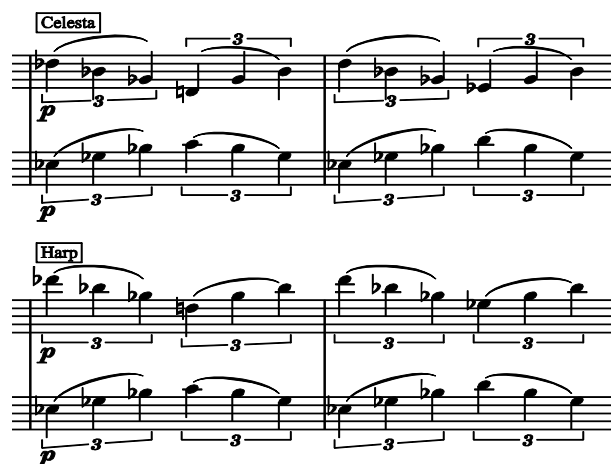


Figure 37: *Born This Way*- Celesta and harp triplets

When Gaga suddenly opens her eyes the brass section enters again, this time with a loud and dramatic Cm9b5 chord. Gaga has an evil look in her eyes and something that resembles a

surveillance camera implanted in her chin. She is a cyborg; a robotic, artificial, alien queen of some sort, refusing to take on any traditional, human notions of gender.



Figure 38: Alien Lady Gaga

The use of straight mute in the trombones and closed hand over the horns creates a cold and metallic timbre fitting the futuristic atmosphere it wishes to evoke. At the same time as this “unstable” chord interrupts the calm, magical triplets in celesta, the violins enter in **ff** with tremolo effect articulating the vivid, scary and turbulent moment. In fact the whole prologue builds around the contrast between the soft, magical and mystical atmosphere created by the sound of harps and celesta and the dramatic entrances of the brass and tremolo-violins. This dramatic moment signals the beginning of the first lines of Lady Gaga’s Manifesto:

This is the Manifesto of Mother Monster; On G.O.A.T, a government owned alien territory in space, a birth of magnificent and magical proportions took place, but the birth was not finite, it was infinite.

The voice has a relaxed and calm tone and is heard in the very front of the mix creating an intimate atmosphere with the listener. When mentioning the government owned alien territory or “G.O.A.T” a goat head formed by stars is shown. This goat head strongly resembles a uterus underbuilding the “birth”- theme of the song and ascribing the text with a specific feminine signature. The manifesto continues:

As the wombs numbered and the mitoses of the future began, it was perceived that this infamous moment in life is not temporary, it is eternal. And thus began the beginning of a new race, a race within the race of humanity, a race which bears no prejudice, no judgment, but boundless freedom.

While these words are uttered, Gaga is portrayed with surrounding flowers of pink, yellow, blue and orange, light colors metaphorically evocative of heaven, goodness and divinity. Gaga's birth is illustrated through “kaleidoscopic”, psychedelic images of hundreds of slimy looking alien heads. She sits with her legs apart while two human-like creatures on each side of her help to

pull out the offspring. Before the offspring appears, slime and butterflies emerges from her blue womb. Musically the birth is underpinned by a dramatic upward movement in violins, vibraphones and flutes. The ascending phrase is ornamented with a dramatic trill and consists of notes drawn from an Ebm-maj7 chord, building up a tension until a final release introduces the birth. When the upward motion has reached its top and the first alien head is born, the orchestra bursts out in triplets consisting of a Bb11-chord. For the first time the text switches to major tonality, signaling the extraordinary moment of the eternal birth with a bright and light character.

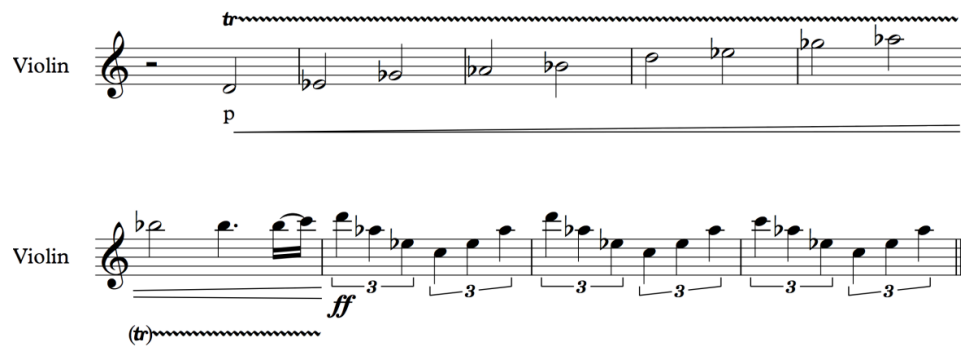


Figure 39: *Born This Way*- Gaga's birth and peak moment in prologue

Birth is something almost all females can identify with, however, paradoxically enough, it is a very rare thematic used in mainstream popular music. When analyzing Vandervelde's *Genesis II*

in the book *Feminine Endings*(1991), McClary highlights how birth seldom has been portrayed in western music culture.

The very presence of this image is remarkable, for while Western culture has produced images celebrating such “universal” human concerns as war, it has avoided dealing with the dynamic moment of birth. This seems odd because, given that we all are born, this phenomenon is genuinely universal. But its absence is also predictable since the birthing process is exclusively female, and cultural themes by and large have been determined by patriarchal interests (McClary 1991: 116).

Birth, the uterus and the female body has historically been considered sinful, dirty and extremely taboo in western culture. Moreover Christianity’s and Catholicism’s portrayals of Virgin Mary has insisted on a pure, sin-less, sex-less femininity. Portrayals of Maria Magdalena, Virgin Mary’s alter-ego, possess a more mundane sexuality. However none of these figures combines the notion of a sexual femininity with a motherly femininity. Neither do they represent the realities of the female body in relation to birth.

Gaga’s presentation of birth relates specifically to the female body and female experience. Her “alien”-birth is not a brutal, bloody and realistic portrayal of a birth, but it is nevertheless a “body fluid-filled”, apparently painful birth that in many ways has a resemblance to a human birth. Gaga’s birth thus represents one of the most important and dynamic moments in many women’s life. She says about the video that;

People were shocked by the Born This Way video which I think is very beautiful and a very painterly approach to this idea of birth and afterbirth (Lady Gaga on *Loose Women* May 2011²⁵)

Gaga’s use of this theme can be seen as feminist approach for reversing the historically hetero normative, male-dominated portrayals of the female body. There is further something “godlike” and sublime about her figure that has strong connotations towards the Christian idea of Virgin Mary’s holy birth. Lady Gaga’s cosmic birth is presumably a sexless birth, as we never see her with a man, but rather in space, as a cosmic mother to an entire race. This connection is also emphasized through the symbolic use of the unicorn seen in the beginning (in the pink triangle) and at the end (Gaga is riding the unicorn) of the video.

The Birth of Evil

After this moment of birth the manifesto continues in a new direction:

But on that same day as the eternal mother hovered in the multiverse, another more terrifying birth took place, the birth of evil. And as she herself split into two, rotating in agony between two ultimate forces, the pendulum of choice began and stands. It seems easy you imagine to gravitate instantly and unwaveringly towards good, but she wondered; how can I protect something so perfect without evil?

²⁵ Lady Gaga on *Loose Women*, May2011, Accessed 28.10.2011: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Me0P-vZMFT8&feature=related>

Here the colors of the images have changed into red and black. Black connotes death and darkness while red is associative of sin, blood and the flames of hell. The camera is moving downwards while human-like, red bodies appear in several formations with a black background. When the narrator talks about the birth of evil the bodies take the form of a skull. The anguish and dread of the dark and evil sides of this birth is signaled musically only three bars after the glory and brightness of the first birth. The brass section has now grown and includes straight muted trumpets. There is a change to minor tonality marked by an am9 chord in **ff**. The dark colors, the cameras downward movement and the music all connote evil, hell and the dark forces of the underworld.

The camera then depicts a background that resembles a black and white ultrasound image with Gaga sitting in the middle on top of two lightning-like metal stands, wearing black leather with wild, blond hair and red nail polish. From between her legs she pulls out a skeleton/zombie-like creature covered in a seal of slime. She is then portrayed holding a black, huge machine gun between her legs, shooting around her, symbolically enough, from her Vagina. Sonically, church bells are heard in the background bringing to mind death. While she is holding the gun and looking into the camera with a wild and crazy gaze, descending, out of tune, bell-like sound effects are heard creating a disturbing and insane atmosphere. McClary argues that insanity historically has been associated with females, moreover female sexuality and that this becomes evident in art and music's representation of madwomen (McClary 1991). McClary states that usually madwomen were silent and did not have the power of language, however in music and opera they at least had the power of the medium; they had a voice. Nevertheless the portrayals of madwoman in opera were still marked as the insane, mad and emotional "other" as opposed to the rational and sane man.

Thus the composer constructing a madwoman is compelled to ensure that the listener experiences and *yet does not identify with* the discourse of madness. It became crucial, therefore, that the musical voice of reason be ever audibly present as a reminder, so that the ravings of the madwoman will remain securely marked as radically "Other," so that contagion will not spread (McClary 1991:86).

Gaga reconfigures this stereotyped image of a madwoman; she is communicating a madness that is fully "contagious": encouraging her listeners, females, gays and ethnic minorities to live out their monstrous inside, live out what societies, and religions in many places fear and consider insane. She does what McClary writes about Diamanda Galas performances in the 1970's;

Her images enter into public circulation, challenging the premises of the prestigious male-constructed madwomen preserved within the musical canon and giving voice to what has always been represented as radically “Other” (McClary 1991:111).



Figure 40: Evil and insane Lady Gaga

McClary links insanity to government control and surveillance by stating that insanity homes and institutions were made for several reasons;

[...] to protect the poor unfortunate beings from the outside world. But it also was motivated by the modern state's obsession with surveillance, its need to define and control behavior [...] Moreover they came to perceive all women—even apparently “normal” ones—as always highly susceptible to mental breakdown, precisely because of their sexuality. The surveillance and control that had always characterized the psychiatric profession became focused on the “problem” of Woman, and so it has remained with substantial help from Darwin and Freud» (McClary 1991:83,84).

Lady Gaga also introduces the theme of mind-control and surveillance. Although the manifesto talks about ultimate freedom for everyone, the depiction of the many, identical, slimy heads with the same “mindless” expressions and the reference to government control connotes the opposite of ultimate freedom. It is evocative of mind-control; symbolizing humans as “mindless” zombies without free will. Musically the theme of mind-control is emphasized through the repetitive, static structure of the triplet pattern and tensions inherent in the harmony. This disturbing sensation of surveillance is supported by the visual images; the camera implanted in Gaga's chin, the mindless zombies and the many pink triangles moving in a trance-like effect towards the camera. It implies how women, gay and ethnic minorities have been forced into acting particular ways, how they have been restrained from acting out their own personal identities and beliefs by society and normative conventions largely imposed and permeated by religion. This can be interpreted as a critique of government control and surveillance, of how society and religion constrain the freedom of individuals.

The religious image of the dutiful and virtuous virgin mother is totally broken down by

her performance of a sexual, dark, sinful, insane and killing mother. Gaga is not only a mother of good, but also the mother of evil. By portraying herself as the creator, the mother of both evil and good, Gaga ascribes herself with godlike powers. The binary position between Good and Evil have strong parallels to Christian and Catholic theology, where good is associated with heaven and God and evil with hell, Satan and human sins. Gaga's performance provokes Christianity as she is tampering with and taking control over both good and evil, moreover what is considered God's domain; birth, death, sin and resurrection. Thus she depicts herself not only as the holy mother, but also as a form of God or overarching creator.

The Mother Monster

By presenting herself as a fictional mother to her followers, she develops a special connection with her fans, an imaginary mother/child relationship. Lady Gaga acts out her constructed fantasy of being '*The Mother Monster*' to her fans that she refers to as her '*little monsters*'. The spiritual, mystical relationship between Mother/Child is a common narrative in catholic tradition. More importantly though, this relationship can be seen as a relationship between a community of "monsters," "outsiders" or "freaks" figuratively embodied through the relationship between the famous pop artist, Lady Gaga and her "monstrous" fans.

The power of the "monster" motif lies in being able to attract other self-identifying outcasts to her music and aesthetic, an effort that Gaga hopes will ultimately empower them to express the "monster" within them (Corona 2011:14).

Victor Corona mentions Michael Jackson, Ozzy Osbourne, Alice Cooper, Marlyn Manson and Rob Zombie as famous popular music artists that use characterizations of the "monstrous" or "horrific" as a way of attracting the audience and media's attention. They manage to construct outrages and exciting performances that also criticize society's prejudice towards otherness.

In popular culture as a whole, the blending of the beautiful with the monstrous is a well-established motif. The contrast of beast and beauty is used to provoke a reckoning with prevailing ideals of appearance, tolerance, justice, and sexuality (Corona 2011:11).

Lady Gaga uses the monstrous imagery within popular music similarly to the way Michael Jackson did, but with a feminine representation of the monstrous. Lady Gaga takes the monster concept to a new level by introducing the horrific not only to the feminine domain but to the most sacred of all female characters, namely the mother.

Gaga's voice makes clear connotations to the idea of an "earth-mother" through using echo effects.

It doesn't matter if you love him, or capital H-I-M (HIM HIM HIM HIM HIM HIM)

However while Whitley's description of the earth mother presents men's fantasy of a sexual or matriarchal, protective figure (Whiteley 2000:34) Gaga modifies it to her own notion of an earth-mother. Gaga's representation of the mother is very powerful and not the goodhearted, loving creature that male artists during the 60's have imagined in their lyrics. Gaga is a mother that has different qualities, she is dangerous and intimidating; playing with what society and religion considers threatening. She promotes gay and women rights and criticizes religion (especially Christianity) for being prejudice against different races, religions and sexualities. In opposition to the 'passive' protective and unthreatening earth mother, Gaga portrays a provocative, sexual and feminist mother that wears black leather, kills and touches herself with sensual movements.

Through the sexual undertones she projects onto the mother figure, Gaga problematizes how women's sexuality has and still is being suppressed by society and religion. She points out in an interview in Norway how famous women and men are treated differently by media when it comes to performing sexuality.

[...] you see If I was a guy and I was sitting here with a cigarette in my hand, grabbing my crotch talking about how I make music cause I love fast cars and fucking girls, you'd call me a rock star, but when I do it in my music and in my videos because I'm a female, because I make pop music, you are judgmental and you say that it is distracting, I'm just a rock star (Lady Gaga 2009.²⁶)

When men perform and show their sexuality it is often considered natural and expected, while when women perform their sexuality it is questioned and considered distracting, moving the focus away from the music, especially when picturing the female body through such an intimate, and exclusively female experience as birth.

A Dancing Critique

After descending bells have marked the end of the prologue, the second part of the music video starts. Boulderling timpani and a tremolo effect in deep strings create an underlying tension to Gaga's artificial and highly echoed voice. "Digital" sound effects and synths give the text a futuristic and artificial feeling fitting her visual character as a twisted, artificial sci-fi alien. Her voice is manipulated through voice filters, reconfiguring her human voice into an "outer space" robotic sound. This distorts the distinctions between the human and the robotic, creating a different mode of imaging the female body as a cyborg (Dickinson 2004, Hawkins 2004). It

²⁶ Lady Gaga video interview for Dagbladet 30.06. 2004, accessed 22.04.2013: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKjL36YXPIs>

rejects placing sexuality or gender into any stereotypical categories through avoiding human-ness. Visually Gaga is walking and dancing her way between her lightly dressed dancers whom are standing on all four with their heads towards the ground. The dancers can be understood as the result of the cosmic birth, they are the many mind-controlled “monsters”. Their “mother”, Gaga, is similar to them, with pointy shoulders and cheeks, only wearing a black underwear and bra. She introduces her single with the words:

It doesn't matter if you love him, or capital H-I-M
just put your paws up,
'cause you were born this way, baby!

She then holds up her hand and forms it as a paw, a gesture signifying the monstrous nature of humans. The first line is ambiguous and could consequently have a set of different meanings.

The song is explicitly religious—“God makes no mistakes”—but God for her can be either “capital H-I-M” or just “him”, a girl’s most recent lover. Each of us is made perfect in our kind, like Aquinas’ angels, and each of us is thus also a monster, a *lusus naturae*, a genetic chimaera. “Who we are” is a new cause in the universe: “We are all born superstars.” (Turner 2011:497)

Hence “him” could refer to a guy, symbolizing human love, while capital H-I-M could refer to God, meaning love for God. It doesn’t matter who you love; either you are heterosexual, homosexual or bisexual, you are still worth the same. However H-I-M could be spelled out as an acronym and refer to His Infernal Majesty or Satan. Following this interpretation the line means that it doesn’t matter whether you follow God (the good) or Satan (the evil) or any other religion, because evil as well as good forces are inherent in all humans, and everyone is just as much worth no matter what they believe in.

To equate Satan with God could be seen as strong religious critique and can for many Christians be perceived as highly blasphemous, controversial and provocative. Most likely Gaga plays with the fact that the line inherits multiple meanings and can be interpreted differently from listener to listener. She creates a mystic and controversy around her that draws attention and attracts many different groups of audiences. The essential meaning remains the same; freedom to believe in and love whoever and whatever one wants.

After these words resonate with echo effects, a danceable groove is established along with a switch to major tonality, releasing the tension and creating a bright and joyful mood. Drums, bass and synths make out the accompaniment to Gaga’s echoed vocals. The repeating chords that provide the basic harmonic framework for the rest of the song are made up of a 1-7-

4-1 progression consisting of F#-E-B-F#. The hit has a conventional form; intro-verse-refrain-verse-refrain-bridge-refrain-ending.

The mother figure that Lady Gaga refers to in the first verse teaches her how to become a proper woman according to certain indoctrinated norms.

My mama told me when I was young
we are all born superstars.
She rolled my hair and put my lipstick on
in the glass of her boudoir

The mother acts paradoxical, by telling Gaga everyone is born a superstar and then rolling her hair and changing her natural appearance so that she can become as beautiful as, or more like a superstar. This can be interpreted as Gaga's disapproval of how women are raised into certain fixated gendered identities created by society. Through these lines Lady Gaga also emphasizes a matriarchal lineage through the feminine relationship between Mother/Daughter thus positioning the text further within the feminine realm.

Between each verse and chorus the distorted synth sound fits the modern sound of a 21st century dance hit perfectly. During the chorus Gaga's voice becomes increasingly powerful accentuated by a rough edge, a high pitch, increasing volume and backing, multiple vocals. The chorus is a very melodic and joyful tune fitting the optimistic lyrics of the song. The optimistic slogan words '*right track*' are highlighted by appearing as quavers placed on the down beat at the same time as the chord shifts from B to E. Underlying the melody is a danceable beat made up of bass drum on every beat and high-hat on the back beats.

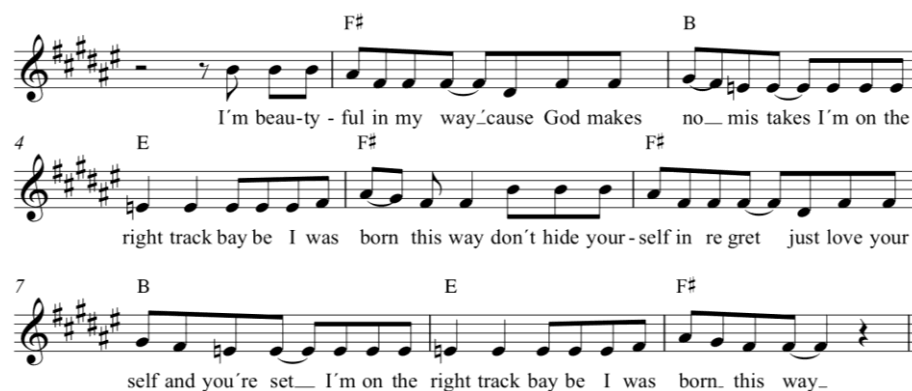


Figure 41: *Born This Way*-Refrain

Dickinson describes how Cher was perceived as a pop Diva among gay communities and how the single *Believe* became a huge hit among gay communities. Dickinson describes typical gay- anthems as danceable disco tunes with lyrical themes that speak of anti -prejudice.

Lyricaly, 'Believe' also invokes a theme familiar to gay dance classics: the triumph of and liberation of the downtrodden or unloved (Dickinson 2004:176).

In *Born This Way*, the musical style and lyrics are directly aimed towards the Gay Communities celebrating and dancing culture, speaking of triumph and freedom of prejudice for people considered different. The festive melody and physical engaging beat of the bass drum maintains a dancing disco feel similarly to Cher's *Believe*. These arguments are based on stereotypical representations of the gay community, but nevertheless it's clear that Gaga wishes to address the gay society by using musical aspects and lyrics associated with their culture. Dancing and body movement is traditionally associated with the female body and feminine qualities or with modern gay cultures disco and dancing practices (McClary 1991).

The mind/body-masculine/feminine problem places dance decisively on the side of the "feminine" body rather than with the objective "masculine" intellect. It is for this reason that dance music in general usually is dismissed by music critics, even by "serious" rock critics (McClary 1991:153).

Taking on atypical masculine behavior or what is considered "feminine" qualities and exaggerating it can be considered as a way Gay communities perform camp, distancing and defining themselves in opposition to the image of the hetero normative male within mainstream western society (Dickinson 2004:177). Lady Gaga uses camp as an ironic measure that has a serious and critical undertone that appeals to and is associated with the Gay community thereby becoming a front figure for their rights, their Diva or 'monster' mother.

After the first part of the chorus, Gaga changes vocal style to speaking out the lyrics with a rhythmic feel.

Don't be a drag, just be a queen
Whether you're broke or evergreen
You're black, white, beige, chola descent
You're Lebanese, you're orient.

Whether life's disabilities
Left you outcast, bullied, or teased
Rejoice and love yourself today
'Cause baby you were born this way

She expresses solidarity with the marginalized minorities from a top-down position. Paradoxically she is a powerful heterosexual white woman taking the gay community and racial minorities under her wing through her musical expression. She identifies with their “otherness” and profits from this, while actually not quite being one of the marginalized “others”, although she is of course a woman. Underneath this theatrical spectacle; acting as this utopian, universal feminine figure that transcends notions of ethnic, sexual and national boundaries, Lady Gaga's “real” underlying identity shines through. She is still the localized, eccentric, *white* New York girl with the catholic and Italian heritage. Her New York belonging is communicated through negotiating the city’s sense of being a global metropolitan center; an urban constellation of cultural diversity. Thus Gaga's liberal New York attitude is expressed through her eccentric, versatile gendered performance.

This versatile gendered identity can also be seen in the way Gaga varies between melodious, emotional singing and rhythmical, rap-like speaking. These two ways of using the voice have traditional gendered implications. Males are often associated with the rational mind and language and the females with the body and irrational emotions.

At its simplest, this division of voices is between male rapping and female soul-singing, between male speech and female song, male rhythm and female melody. A more complex description would see the gendered division as between a form of speech whose main musical feature is rhythm, and a form of singing where melody is foregrounded over verbal messages (Bradby 1993:167).

Gaga uses many different vocal timbres throughout the text: in the chorus it is powerful and high in pitch, in the verses she has a sensual deep voice, sometimes she is whispering or singing with an artificial, nasal voice, other times her voice has echo effects. Hence Gaga never holds on to one fixed feminine voice, she presents rather a multifaceted voice. Because Lady Gaga takes on many different images rather than identifying with one certain gendered character her identity becomes undefinable and alien (Hawkins 2002). She is continuously transformable and plays with masquerade refusing to freeze into stereotypical feminine images.

Born this way is about living life unafraid of reality and fantasy at the same time. On the album cover I’m half woman, half motorcycle as I now feel that I am in a space where I can explain artistically that I am endlessly transformative and am now the vehicle not just for my voice, but for the voice of my generation and what we have to say about the world (Lady Gaga 2011²⁷)

This masquerading fits her artistic message that is celebrating differences. Lady Gaga states how important different outfits are for her performances in an interview with Larry King.

²⁷ Lady Gaga on *Loose Women*, May2011, Accessed 28.10.2011: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Me0P-vZMFT8&feature=related>

But, lots of the newer, more original pieces, their meant to be kind of a rejection of what people view about women. I guess I'm a feminist, I AM a feminist and I want to change the way people view women [...] so I guess I'm trying to push the limits, push the boundaries as much as I can (Lady Gaga 2010²⁸)

The final chorus is characterized by a choreography that shows two zombies, Gaga, the feminine zombie with pink hair, and a male zombie. The zombies are dancing with grinding movements up against each other. It evokes religiously "sinful" sexual acts between two queer zombies. The feminine Zombie is taking the lead while the masculine zombie is acting more passively. These identities are depicted ironically as monstrous, as this is how religion and society often perceives them. After Gaga repeats "Born this way hey!" several times the beat stops and is replaced by electric background synths and whispering voices. Visually Gaga pays a tribute to deceased Michael Jackson by wearing a white glove and dancing the "moon walk" in a dark foggy alley. After this short reference to Michael Jackson Gaga's sad face, shedding a tear, is shown in a close up. This gesture inherits multiple meanings; most obviously she is crying for famous Michael Jackson's death, though this is also a tear for everyone being oppressed. The very end of the text shows, unlike the beginning of the prologue, an upright pink triangle with Gaga riding a unicorn underneath a rainbow dedicated to the Gay pride movements. Suddenly Zombie-Gaga pops up in the triangle blowing a pink bubble gum while the music punctuates softly with two exclamation marks.

7 Final Reflections on Musical Revelations

From South Africa to Norway to New York City I have investigated four different case studies both geographically and culturally. All cases present in one way or another, new modes of religious faith in contemporary society. Neo-paganism, Satanism and the Fiver Percent Nation are inspired by older religious traditions, but constitute relatively new religious expressions and configurations. The way Lady Gaga distorts catholic narratives presents a critical more liberal and personal way of Christian belief. Zahara and DJ Sbu are part of a Pentecostal movement that is experiencing renewed growth on the African continent. The different artists also have very different ways of incorporating and utilizing religious narratives. Zahara and DJ Sbu present their Pentecostal affiliation by *creating a means for experiencing a religious feeling* of sublimity and transcendence. Nas utilizes Islam in his musical expression as *one part of performing his*

²⁸ Lady Gaga Interview on Larry King 01.06.2010, Accessed 08.05.2012: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCW3v5gbxY&feature=related>

identity. Gaga twists catholic imageries and narratives to *critique Christianity*. While Gorgoroth is the case that most explicitly *communicates and preaches religious ideology*. By investigating this diverse spectrum of cases I have shown that religion works in different ways as a prominent force across a wide array of popular music genres, cultures and places. I have also illuminated some ways in which religion influences popular music's presentation of identity. Investigating religion has supplied my analysis with yet another layer when it comes to exploring popular music aesthetics and identities. I conclude by comparing how religion affected the musical presentation of gender in the different cases.

Nas's representation of black American masculinity can be read through his incorporation of the five percent nation ideology in his music. The Don-figure works not only as a stereotypical depiction of the rich city-gangster, but also the five percent notion of the black man as God. This is emphasized through Nas's flashing wealth, respect in the hood, criminal background and especially through his god-like skills in rapping and poetry. Poetry is a tradition that has long and important roots within Islam and rap is considered an extension of this tradition within the five percent nation. Through his skills in mastering the "words of knowledge" he "knows" the sacred and hidden powers of the divine. Through his entry to sacred knowledge he becomes powerful; a black, male God. This strong character is put in opposition to the women in the video who appear as sexual available beauty objects, there to give the God and his homosocial companions' pleasure. Nas raps with confidence and is able to: "Pick which Bitch to bless the king" in which "the King" obviously is himself. These gendered relations are embarked within the black five percent nation communities. The black man is given power through notions of being kings or Gods, empowering them after years of being marginalized and oppressed under the majority of white population in USA. The paradox is that on the other hand, this Black Nationalism degrades black women into "incomplete" followers or sexual objects for their men, enforcing inequality on a whole other level.

Gorgoroth's performance of masculinity is, in fact, similar to that of Nas's. Through Satanism's belief that there is a powerful force in man, and that this force constitutes the essence of life, a God, or in this case Satan, is very similar to the five percent ideology's thought of the black man as a manifestation of God. When mixing Satanism and Nordic heathen beliefs Gorgoroth embraces the idea that the white, Nordic men are superior, powerful beings. Gorgoroth then, like Nas and Dj Sbu expresses a homosociality through their music. This

expression of a homosocial bond reinforces the hegemonic order of masculine power and feminine subordination common in most patriarchal societies. Gorgoroth's presentation of this white masculinity is, in a way, even more extreme and substantial than Nas's portrayal of the black, King or God. While five percent ideology sees black men only as a manifestation of God and incorporates females in their imagery, if only as subordinates or desired objects to their male companions, Gorgoroth and Satanism leaves women completely out of the picture. They embrace the idea of the white man as the one and only ultimate divine and strong being. Five Percent ideology and Islam considers the unity of man and women as sacred. Gorgoroth goes against any thought of sexually constrained bonds. Rather they promote selfish desires and lusts of individuals, Gorgoroth encourages the freedom to do whatever one wants in sexual relationships as well as other aspects of life. This bears resemblances to Lady Gaga's ideas of living out your inner self; the idea of individual freedom to transgress society and Christianity's restrictions and constraints. Because they both reject any thought of a sacred unity or monogamous relationship between man and woman, ideologically they both open up for alternative sexualities, like homosexuals, bisexuals and queer identities. However, in Gorgoroth's world, only the physical and mentally strongest wins, leaving no compassion or room for "the weak" in society. Performing as strong white males, confirming the pre-Christian Viking ideal, leaves less room for alternative masculinities, ethnicities and maybe especially femininities. Paradoxical enough, Gorgoroth preaches of individual freedom while at the same time enforcing and performing quite narrow, limited identities and completely rejecting any other religious values and views than their own.

In Zahara and DJ Sbu's text I looked specifically at the power relation between the gendered bodies projected in the video. Here, the most significant finding, which is significantly different from gendered depictions in western popular culture, was the non-sexualized representations of women. If this is due to the artists Pentecostal or Christian moral values I am not sure, but they do fit with Christianity's emphasis on the monogamous marriage and female chastity. Moreover the two main female figures which constitute Zahara's persona seemed to be inspired by femininities that manifest moral, domestic, Christian loving and idealized notions of the female-body. The protective, natural, black mother is negotiated through Zahara's powerful, deep and warm voice and compassionate lyrics, while the innocent, young and naïve girl is negotiated through her visual appearance; the long white dress and smiling appearance, and

through the way Zahara, as a person, is formed through public discourse in opposition to DJ Sbu. It is clear that DJ Sbu, as artist and manager, captures a powerful position as a male-figure in control of the technological (read “creative”) output in the mix. He also constitutes a dominant part of a homosocial network of men. The video clearly works on his premises and through media he is presented as the sensible, rational figure protecting young and inexperienced Zahara from the dangers of the surrounding world. The naturalized African earth mother, the cute rural girl and the westernized beauty-images of the women in the car represent different fixed female characters made available for listeners to identify with. Conveying these femininities is one way in which females are allowed to express themselves within a male-dominant culture.

Accepting the roles and images offered to them and experiencing with pre-fabricated roles and identities are fundamental strategies for girl’s self-fashioning, and should not be dismissed as submissive and derivative. Whether or not they consciously recognize it, girls are aware that so-called ‘youth culture’ is often actually ‘boy culture’, and that the onus is on girls to find ways of making cultural institutions and artifacts fit them (Warwick 2004:199)

Lengoma produces stereotype depictions in which the female listener can choose to recognize, oppose, reproduce or utilize as a way of constituting their own subjectivity as women. What is concerning though is that the female bodies, personas and voices in *Lengoma* seem to have little influence in constituting their own notion of femininity. These female figures are depicted in opposition to powerful male producers in a male society, hence undermining female agency and confirming the gendered inequality between man and woman. This is disturbing in the way these gendered relations might be promoted through the increasingly popular charismatic Christian movements, thus ascribing the gendered inequalities as a sort of God-given truth or way of life. However Robbins (2004) also points to ways in which Pentecostalism can be empowering for female individuals ascribing them spiritual and domestic power as well as public influence.

At the other end of the spectrum, we find Lady Gaga's performance of gender. Although also Gaga, like Zahara, utilizes the mother figure, her notion of the “earth mother” is a quite different one. Gaga’s mother is dark, alien, twisted and powerful. Through a violent, sexual, alien and slimy notion of the “pure” catholic image of the Virgin Mary, she is presenting the female figure as multifaceted and versatile. Rather than confining femininity to strict, fixed, stereotypes, she is continuously transformable like a chameleon, showing complete control of her own configurations and subjectivity. Her depiction of a body fluid-filled birth is the most controversial image she presents us with. Here she displays the female body through its most intimate and agonizing experience. Her portrayals work to upset and critique historical and

traditional notions of femininity as weak and “cute” or as sexual objects for the male gaze. By putting her own notions of femininity onto the most sacred of all female characters within Christianity, the Virgin Mary, she critiques the way Christian moral has constrained females understanding of them; in fact many have considered Gaga’s videos and performances as utterly blasphemous. However she does not give the female listener a realistic or natural alternative to femininity to identify with. Her masquerading alien character and cyborg echo-voice leaves the listener and viewer with a sense of distance to the image. She actually escapes a realistic depiction of the female body through distorting it completely, until it is, truly “unreal”.

Accordingly the female viewers are left with continuously flux, extreme and alien images of the female body and sexuality. Hence Zahara's and Dj Sbu's approaches to femininity might be easier to identify with. In fact, Zahara, interpreted in a specific way, might constitute an empowering female voice within South African public culture, giving females realistic alternatives to femininity in which they can reject and engage in as they find appropriate. The question then becomes to what extent portrayals and representations of femininity (and masculinity and other aspects of identity for that matter) in popular music has the power to directly affect the listeners' construction of themselves.

My thesis has concentrated on how image and sound together form conceptions of identity. The music videos have been platforms for investigating gender relations and religious undertones in popular music. Through my hermeneutic readings I have managed to go in depth on these specific subject matters and revealed otherwise hidden and overlooked aspects of the music. By examining both the music video's aesthetic features and the surrounding contexts in detail, I have contributed to a better understanding of how religion affects popular music expression in the 21st century. My hermeneutic readings do not focus on the perceptive aspects of listening and it leaves out empirical fieldwork. Hence a further investigation of the connections between popular music and religion could also benefit from other such approaches. Interviews, questionnaires and other fieldwork data could illuminate how popular music both audibly and visually works and affects a wide range of people in everyday life. Nonetheless, I have shown how musical representations of identities, especially concerning gender and place, are constructed and affected by religion. Whether the musical expression opposes or confirms religious feelings or faith, religion is often of essence to how the musical aesthetic takes form. Religion is still a prominent feature of almost any culture and deserves to be taken seriously as

an important force in contemporary society. Religion must be included alongside politics, nationality, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity and place when analyzing and investigating popular music and identity.

References

Bibliography

- Aidi, Hisham 2004, «Verily, there is only one hip-hop Umma»: Islam, cultural protest and Urban marginality» in *Socialism and Democracy*, 18:2, 107-126, Routledge
- Alim, H. Samy 2006, «Re-inventing Islam with Unique Modern Tones: Muslim Hip Hop Artists as Verbal Mujahidin» In *Souls: A Critical Journal of Black Politics, Culture, and Society*, 8:4, 45-58, Taylor & Francis
- Allen, Lara 2004, «Kwaito versus Crossed-over: Music and Identity during South Africa's Rainbow Years, 1994–99», in *Social Dynamics: A journal of African studies*, 30:2, 82-111, Routledge
- Anderson, Allan 2005, «New African Initiated Pentecostalism and Charismatics in South Africa» in *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 35, Fasc. 1, New Dimensions in the Study of Pentecostalism (Feb., 2005), pp. 66-92, BRILL
- Arnett, Jeffrey J. 1996, *Metal Heads-Heavy Metal Music and Adolescent Alienation*, USA: Westview Press, Inc.
- Beck, Ulrich and Sznaider, Natan 2006, «Unpacking cosmopolitanism for the social sciences: a research agenda» in *The British Journal of Sociology*, Volume 57 Issue 1: Blackwell Publishing Ltd,
- Bennett, Andy 2004, «Music, Space and Place» in Whiteley, Bennet, Hawkins (Ed.) *Music, Space and Place- Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, Burlington: Ashgate
- Bernard, Rhoda 2009, «Music making, transcendence, flow, and music education » in *International Journal of Education & the Arts*, 10(14).
- Bradby, Barbara 1993, «Sampling sexuality: gender, technology and the body in dance music» in *Popular Music*, 12, pp. 155-176, Cambridge University Press

- Born, Georgina 2000, «Music and the Representation/Articulation of Sociocultural Identities» in *Western Music and its Others: Difference, Representation and Appropriation in Music*, London, L.A., Berkeley: University of California Press
- Burnett, Robert 1996, *the Global Jukebox- the International Music Industry*, New York: Routledge
- Butler, Judith 1993, *Bodies That Matter: on Discursive Limits of "Sex"* New York: Routledge
- Butler, Judith 1990, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* London, New York: Routledge
- Caillois, Roger and Walker, Scott 1982, «The Myth of the Unicorn» in *Diogenes* 30: 1, Sage Journals
- Chernoff, John M. 1991, «The Rhythmic Medium in African Music» in *New Literary History*, Vol. 22, No. 4, Papers from the Commonwealth Center for Literary and Cultural Change pp. 1093-1102, the Johns Hopkins University Press
- Corona, Victor P. 2011, «Memory, Monsters, and Lady Gaga» in *The Journal of Popular Culture*, first published online: 23 MAR 2011, DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-5931.2011.00809.x
- Cresswell, Tim 2004, *Place-a short introduction*, USA, UK, Australia: Blackwell Publishing
- Daynes, Sarah 2004, «The Musical Construction of the Diaspora: the case of Reggae and Rastafari» in Whiteley, Bennet, Hawkins (Ed.) *Music, Space and Place- Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, Burlington: Ashgate
- Davie, Grace 2002, *Europe: The Exceptional Case-Parameters of Faith in the Modern World*, Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd.
- Deaville, James 2010. «The Beauty of Horror, Kilar, Coppola and Dracula» in *Music in the Horror Film: Listening to Fear* ed. by Lerner, Neil, New York: Routledge
- Dibben, Nicola 1999, «Representations of Femininity in Popular Music» in *Popular Music*, Vol. 18, No. 3, pp. 331-355, Cambridge University Press
- Dickinson, Kay 2004, «'Believe': Vocoders, Digital Female Identity and Camp» in Whiteley, Bennet, Hawkins (Ed.) *Music, Space and Place- Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, Burlington: Ashgate
- Durrheim, Kevin and Dixon, John 2010, «Racial Contact and Change in South Africa» in *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 66, No. 2, pp. 273--288
- Feld, Steven 1984. «Communication, Music, and Speech about Music» in *Yearbook for Traditional Music*, Vol. 16, pp. 1-18, International Council for Traditional Music

- Floyd-Thomas, Juan M. 2003, «A Jihad of Words: The Evolution of African American Islam and Contemporary Hip-Hop» in Pinn (Ed.) *Noise and Spirit: the Religious and Spiritual Sensibilities of Rap Music*, New York University Press
- Frith, Simon 1998, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music*, Oxford University Press
- Frith, Simon 1996, *Performing Rites: On the Value of Popular Music* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press
- Frith, Simon 1996, «Music and Identity» in Hall and du Gay (Ed.), *Questions of cultural Identity*, London: Sage Publications
- Geertz, Clifford 1976. «Art as a Cultural System» in *MLN*, Vol. 91, No. 6, *Comparative Literature* (December), pp. 1473-1499, the John Hopkins University Press
- Geertz, Clifford 1966. «Religion as a Cultural System» in *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, Ed. Michael Banton, London: Routledge
- Gilhus, Ingvild S. and Mikaelson, Lisbeth 2007, «Nyreligiøsitet» Ch. 10 in *Verdens Levende Religioner*, Norway: Pax Forlag
- Gifford, Paul 1998, *African Christianity- its Public Role*, London: C. Hurst & Co. (Publishers) Ltd.
- Granholm, Kenneth 2011. «“Sons of Northern Darkness”: Heathen Influences in Black Metal and Neofolk Music» in *Numen* 58, 514–544, Department of History of Religions, Stockholm University SE-10691, Stockholm, Sweden
- Gray, Herman 1995. «Black Masculinity and Visual Culture» in *Callaloo*, Vol. 18, No. 2, pp. 401-405, the Johns Hopkins University Press
- Greer, John M. 2003, *the New Encyclopedia of the Occult*, Llewellyn Publications
- Haeberle, Erwin J. 1981 «Swastika, Pink Triangle, and Yellow Star - The Destruction of Sexology and the Persecution of Homosexuals in Nazi Germany» in *the Journal of Sex Research*, vol. 17, no. 3, pp. 270-287
- Harvey, David 1996 «From Space to Place and Back Again» in *Justice Nature and the Politics of Difference*, Cambridge MA: Blackwell Publishers
- Hawkins, Stan 2009. *The British Pop Dandy: Masculinity, Popular Music and Culture* Burlington: Ashgate
- Hawkins, Stan 2002. *Settling the Pop Score: Pop Texts and Identity Politics* Burlington: Ashgate

- Hawkins, Stan 2002, «*Erlkonig* revisited-musical modeling, appropriation, and reconfiguration in Norway's Wunderkammer » in *Studia Musicologica Norwegica* (28), Norsk Musikkforlag
- Hawkins, Stan 2001, «Musicological Quagmires in Popular Music- Seeds of Detailed Conflict» in *Popular Music Online*, Accessed 22.04.2013: <http://www.popular-musicology-online.com/issues/01/hawkins.html>
- Impey, Angela 2001, «Resurrecting the Flesh? Reflections on Women in Kwaito» in *Agenda*, No. 49, Culture: Transgressing Boundaries, pp. 44-50, Agenda Feminist Media
- Kerman, Herman 1980, «How We Got into Analysis, and How to Get out» in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Winter), pp. 311-331, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press
- Kessler, Gary 2007, *Studying Religion-an Introduction through Cases*. McGraw Hill Higher Education; 3 editions
- Khabeer, Suad A. 2007, «Rep that Islam: The Rhyme and Reason of American Islamic Hip Hop» in *The Muslim World*, Vol.97 issue: 1 (Published online 05.01.2007)
- Kiesling, Scott. 2005, «Homosocial desire in men's talk: Balancing and re-creating cultural discourses of masculinity» in *Language in Society*, 34, 695–726, Cambridge University Press
- Krims, Adam 2000, *Rap music and the poetics of identity*, Cambridge University Press
- Langlois, Tony 1992. «Can You Feel It? DJs and House Music Culture in the UK» in *Popular Music*, Vol. 11, No. 2, A Changing Europe, pp. 229-238, Cambridge University Press
- LaVey, Anton S. 1969, *The Satanic Bible*, University Books
- Leirvik, Odd 2007, *Religionspluralisme: Mangfold, konflikt og dialog i Norge*, Norway: Pax Forlag
- Lucas, Deeks and Spracklen 2011. «Grim Up North: Northern England, Northern Europe and Black Metal» in *Journal for Cultural Research*, 15:3,279-295, Routledge
- Maslow, Abraham H. 1971, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, USA: The Viking Press
- Massey, Doreen «a Global Sense of Place» in Bird, Curtis, Putnam, Robertson, Tickner (eds.) *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, London: Routledge
- Mayhew, Emma 2004, «Positioning the Producer: Gender Divisions in Creative Labour and Value» in Whiteley, Bennet, Hawkins (Ed.) *Music, Space and Place- Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, Burlington: Ashgate

- McClary, Susan 1991. *Feminine Endings: Music, Gender and Sexuality* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press
- Meyer, Birgit 2004. «Christianity in Africa: From African Independent to Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches» in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 33, pp. 447-474, Annual Reviews
- Middleton, Richard 2000. «Introduction: Locating the Popular Music Text» in *Reading Pop* New York: Oxford University Press
- Middleton, Richard 1990, *Studying Popular Music*, Buckingham: Open University Press
- Miller-Young, Mireille 2007. «Hip-Hop Honeys and Da Hustlaz: Black Sexualities in the New Hip-Hop Pornography» in *Meridians: feminism, race, transnationalism*, Volume 8, Number 1, pp. 261-292, Indiana University Press
- Miyakawa, Felicia M. 2005, *Five Percenter Rap: God Hop's Music, Message, and Black Muslim Mission*, Indiana University Press
- Mørk, Gry 2011, «Why didn't the Churches Begin to Burn a Thousand Years Earlier?» in *Religion and Popular music in Europe : New Expressions of Sacred and Secular Identity* ed. by Bossius, Hager and Kahn-Harris I.B, New York: Tauris & Co Ltd.
- O'Flynn, John 2007, «National Identity and Music in Transition: Issues of Authenticity in a Global Setting» in *Music, National Identity and the Politics of Location*, Ed. By Biddle and Knights Burlington: Ashgate
- Perry, Imani 2004, *Prophets of the Hood: Politics and Poetics in Hip Hop*, Duke University Press
- Peterson, Bhekizizwe 2003. «Kwaito, 'dawgs' and the antimonies of hustling» in *African Identities*, 1:2, 197-213, Routledge
- Regev, Motti 2007, «Cultural Uniqueness and Aesthetic Cosmopolitanism» in *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 10 no. 1 123-138, Sage Journals
- Riesebrodt, Martin 2003. «Religion in Global Perspective » in Juergensmeyer (ed.) *Global Religions-an Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Robbins, Joel 2004, «The Globalization of Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity» in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 33, pp. 117-143, Annual Reviews
- Rose, Tricia 1994, *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America*, Wesleyan University Press
- Ruud, Even 1997, *Musikk og Identitet*, Oslo: Universitetsforlaget

- Schenk, Jan 2009 «Quantifying Taste: Findings from a survey on media and taste among teenagers from six high schools in Cape Town», Center for Social Science Research CSSR Working paper No. 250
- Seekings, Jeremy 2008, «The continuing Salience of race: Discrimination and diversity in South Africa» in *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Routledge
- Seekings, Jeremy and Nattrass, Nicoli 2001. « "Two Nations"? Race and Economic Inequality in South Africa Today» in *Daedalus*, Vol. 130, No. 1, Why South Africa Matters, pp. 45-70, the MIT Press
- Sedgwick, Eve K. 1985, *Between Men- English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Colombia University Press
- Shuker, Roy 1998. *Key Concepts in Popular Music*, New York: Routledge
- Smart, Ninian 2003. «The Global Future of Religion » in Juergensmeyer (ed.) *Global Religions- an Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press
- Steingo, Gavin 2005: «South African Music after Apartheid: Kwaito, the “Party Politic,” and the Appropriation of Gold as a Sign of Success» in *Popular Music and Society*, 28:3,333-357, Routledge
- Stokes, Martin 2007. «On Musical Cosmopolitanism» in *the Macalester International Roundtable*. Paper 3. <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/intlrtable/3>
- Strinati, Dominic 1995, «Postmodernism and Popular Culture» in *an Introduction to Theories of Popular Culture*, Routledge
- Swartz, Sharlene 2003, «Is Kwaito South African Hip Hop? Why the answer matters and who it matters to» from www.theyouthinstitute.org, accessed 22.04.2013: http://www.theyouthinstitute.org/e107_files/public/is_kwaito_south_african_hip_hop.pdf
- Sylvan, Robin 2002. *Trace of the Spirit: the Religious Dimensions of Popular Music*, New York and London: New York University Press
- Tagg, Philip 2004, «Anti-depressants and musical anguish management, *Keynote presentation IASPM Latin America conference*: <http://www.tagg.org/articles/iasprio0406.html>
- Tagg, Philip 1994. «Subjectivity and Soundscape, Motorbikes and Music» in Helmi Järviluoma (ed.) *Soundscapes. Essays on Vroom and Moo*, Tampere: Department of Folk Tradition: 48-66
- Tagg, Philip 1982. «Analyzing Popular Music: Theory, Method and Practice» in *Popular Music*, 2 (1982): 37-65, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

- Taub, Diane. E. and Nelson, Lawrence. D. 1993, *SATANISM IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICA* in *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34: 523–541.
- Toynbee, Jason 2000. *Making Popular Music: Musicians, Creativity and Institutions*, Bloomsbury USOUTH AFRICAN
- Treitler, Leo 1999, «The Historiography of Music: Issues of Past and Present» in (Red) Cook, N & Everist, M. *Rethinking Music* Oxford: Oxford University press
- Turner, Frederick 2011, «Symposium: Taming the Savage Mind-Lady Gaga and the Civil Religion» in *Society*, Volume 48, Issue 6, pp. 495-497, Springer Science + Business Media, LLC 201110.1007/s12115-011-9484-x
- Walser, Robert 2003. «Popular music analysis: ten apothegms and four instances» in Moore, Alan *Analyzing Popular Music* Cambridge: Cambridge University press
- Walser, Robert 1993, *Running with the Devil: Power, Gender, and Madness in Heavy Metal Music* Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press
- Warner, Timoty 2009, «Approaches to Analysing Recordings of Popular Music» in Scott (ed.) *the Ashgate Research Companion to Popular Musicology* Burlington: Ashgate
- Warwick, Jacqueline 2004, «He's got the power: the politics of production in girl group music» in Whiteley, Bennet, Hawkins (Ed.) *Music, Space and Place- Popular Music and Cultural Identity*, Burlington: Ashgate
- Whiteley, Sheila 2000 *Women and popular music- sexuality, identity and subjectivity*, New York: Routledge

Videography

- DJ Sbu feat. Zahara- *Lengoma*, Accessed 22.04.2013:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0N5gwLnQeBw>
- DJ Sbu- *Ndenzeni*, Picture from music video, accessed 25.03.2013:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZeXGKpBmAS8>
- Dunn, McFadyen & Wise 2005, *Metal: A Headbangers Journey*, (Documentary film): Seville Pictures Warner Home Video
- Gaahl from Gorgoroth and Wadrana in video interview 2008, accessed 22.04.2013:
http://www.faceculture.tv/index.php?cnti_key=11783218
- Gorgoroth- *The Sign of an Open Eye*, Accessed 22.04.2013:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73Za2PVVDcI>

Lady Gaga- *Born this Way*, Accessed 22.04.2013:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wV1FrqwZyKw>

Lady Gaga in interview by *Dagbladet* 30.06. 2004, accessed 22.04.2013:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yKjL36YXPIs>

Lady Gaga in interview on *Larry King* 01.06.2010, accessed 08.05.2012:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HCW3v5gbxrY&feature=related>

Lady Gaga in interview on *Loose Women*, May2011, Accessed 28.10.2011:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Me0P-vZMFT8&feature=related>

Laurent, Ray 1970, *Satanis: The Devil's Mass*, (Documentary film): Sherpix

Nas- *The Don*, Accessed 22.04.2013:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E3wIJ774gJs>

Zahara and Dj Sbu in interview on *Expresso*, Accessed 08.03.2013:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKqrvA_3Vko

Zahara-*Loliwe*, Picture from music video, accessed 25.03.2013:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHuWNNsPWxo>

Internet Sites:

Dlamini, Mduduzi 15.04.2012, article on Zahara and DJ Sbu in *Sunday World*, accessed

08.03.2013: <http://www.sundayworld.co.za/news/2012/04/15/zahara-s-their-maid-sisters-believe-nciza-is-ripping-her-off>

Gorgoroth's website, accessed 07.04.2012: www.gorgoroth.info/biography

Hatitye, Eddie, article on Zahara in *Music Industry Online*, accessed 08.03.2013:

<http://www.mio.co.za/article/zahara-sells-out-in-72-hours-2011-09-07>

LaVey, Anton S. «Nine Statements» from *The Satanic Bible* accessed 30.03.2012:

<http://www.churchofSatan.com/Pages/NineStatements.html>

Nas in interview by www.projectcovo.com, accessed 06.05. 2012:

<http://forums.projectcovo.com/showthread.php?t=533717>

«The Supreme Mathematics» from The Five Percent Nation, Accessed 22.04.2013:

<http://www.blackapologetics.com/mathdetail.html>

Music Example:

Herrman, Bernard 1958, *Vertigo- Prelude and Rooftop*, from Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*,
Mercury Records (Heard in intro to Lady Gaga's Music Video)